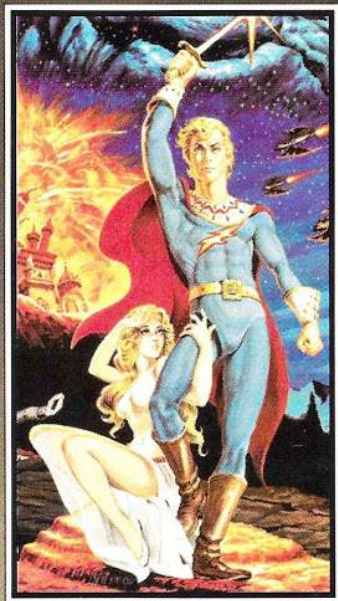


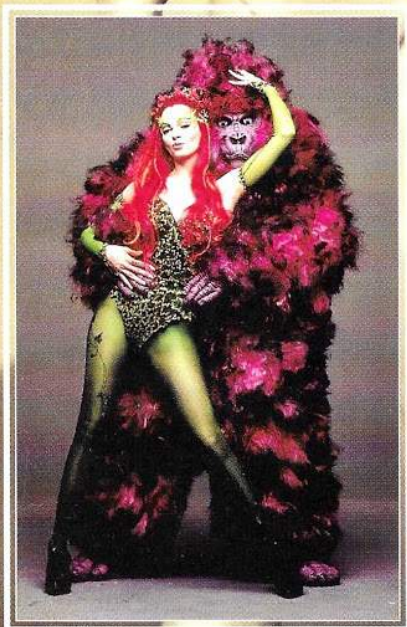
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ART DIRECTOR  
John E. Payne

COPY EDITOR  
Alvin H. Marill

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Dan Clayton

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR  
Forrest J Ackerman

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#### STAFF WRITERS

John Brunas, Michael Brunas, Ross Care, David Stuart Davies, Tony Earnshaw, Lelia Loban, Bob Madison, John J. Mathews (The News Hound), Richard Scrivani, Kevin G. Shinnick, Drew Sullivan

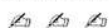
#### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

John E. Payne, Steve Randisi, Michael Spampinato, Danny Savello

CONTRIBUTING ARTIST  
Mary Payne

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS  
Elinor Bernstein, Gary Lee Miller

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS  
Lukas Kendall, John Parnum,  
Tom Weaver



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COVER: Michael Rennie and Lock Martin in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951); *FLESH GORDON* (1972); *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1997).

# Scarlet Letters

Publisher/Editor Richard Valley does Sir Arthur Conan Doyle a disservice in *Scarlet Street* #24. In his otherwise enjoyable article, Fu! Fu!, he writes that ACD's tales "occasionally jar with their anti-Semitism and stereotypical black heavies." That statement is not only inaccurate but inappropriate.

"Anti-Semitism?" Can you cite examples to support these comments because I cannot think of one. But keep in mind while you are searching that, among ACD's many friendships, one of the most famous was with a Jew, Harry Houdini (born Erich Weiss).

ACD was no anti-Semite, much less any other kind of racist. During his life, ACD came to the aid of people such as George Edalji (son of a Parsee from India, or, in the popular parlance of the time, a Black Man) and Sir Roger Casement, a homosexual British soldier who exposed atrocities to natives in the Belgian Congo. (In 1909, ACD wrote *The Crime of the Congo* to spread the news about these atrocities.)

"Stereotypical black heavies?" The only ACD black heavy that comes to mind is the heavy-weight boxer Steve Dixie from the Holmes adventure "The Adventure of the Three Gables." Dixie is two-dimensional, but no more stereotypical than any of the white boxers in "Three Gables" or any other "bruiser" who appeared in any other ACD fiction.

On the other hand, one of ACD's black characters is a delightful "little coal-black negress" child in the Holmes adventure "The Yellow Face," a story whose climax is really not its mystery's resolution but whether a husband will accept this child (actually a mulatto), a daughter from his wife Effie's first marriage in her native America.

Wouldn't it have been more accurate to compare Sax Rohmer with Edgar Rice Burroughs or H.P. Lovecraft, two contemporaries also known to include a racist comment or two in their stories? But why bother apolo-

gizing for Rohmer at all? I agree with the late Henry Brandon (SS #24): "I consider Fu Manchu a fairy tale character—it's not to be taken seriously, for God's sake!"

For instance, I do not want my little girl growing up to be a racist. I teach her that skin color is just pigmentation, that people should be judged by their actions as individuals, and disagreeing with anyone's appearance, opinions, or beliefs is no reason to hate them. If my child ever develops a taste for Rohmer, Conan Doyle, Burroughs, or Lovecraft, I will not consider my efforts a failure. Good Lord, if children couldn't separate the chaff from the wheat (i.e., enjoy an otherwise excellent story while dismissing any racism it may include), irony and sarcasm would become a lost art!

Fu Manchu is one of the all-time great villains, a character who, as



Jeff Siegel argues in his companion article FOOEY!, has risen above any of Rohmer's failings as a writer to penetrate the conscience of Western popular culture. Asians may think this is a backhanded compliment, but it is nevertheless a compliment that three generations of readers around the world have reveled and delighted in Fu's devilry and warped code of honor. Frankly, the absence of new Fu Manchu novels, as far as I'm concerned, is a sad crime against escapist literature.

Continued success with your publication. I don't know if you want to hear this, but I believe it makes a fine literary companion to the exuberant *Famous Monsters*, which, even without 4E (whatever happened there, anyway?), still exhibits the youthful rapture for film fantasy that the Ackerman monster imbued into it.

Steven Philip Jones  
Sundragon Comics  
Cedar Rapids, IA

Glad you like us, Mr. Jones. I didn't mean to imply that Conan Doyle was a racist, merely that some dated characterizations "occasionally jar." Two examples: In "The Stockbroker's Clerk" (1893), we meet Mr. Hall Pycroft, a character treated with admiration by Conan Doyle. Pycroft describes his employer, Arthur Pinner, as being a "dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-bearded man, with a touch of the sheeny about his nose." "Sheeny" is a derogatory term for a Jew, and the description is clearly a stereotypical one. In "The Three Gables" (1926), Steve Dixie makes his entrance thusly: "His broad face and flattened nose were thrust forward, as his sullen dark eyes, with a smoldering gleam of malice in them, turned from one of us to the other. 'Which of you gentlemen is Masser Holmes?' he asked."



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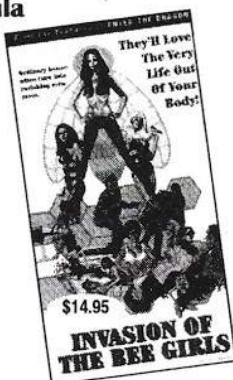
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Continued on page 8



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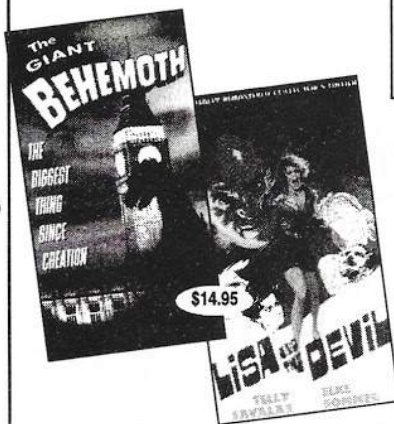
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# Frankly Scarlet



Back in the early days of *Scarlet Street*, which weren't really so very long ago, we were fortunate to make the acquaintance of a quiet, sometimes hang-dog, but always sweet-natured fan of Basil Rathbone named Bernard O'Heir. Bernie's enthusiasm for all things Basil charmed us immediately, and it wasn't long before he joined our masthead as a valued research consultant and helped fill our pages with pix of one of the greatest portrayers of that Greatest of Detectives, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

Sadly, Bernie died early this year, depriving us of his warm, welcome presence at Fanex, Chiller, and so many other horror conventions yet to come. He is missed, and this

issue of *Scarlet Street*, bereft of Rathbone though it is, is dedicated to his memory.

\*\*\*

Well, we dood it! Committed a crime punishable by a wicked glance and a sarcastic (and inevitably very funny) quip!

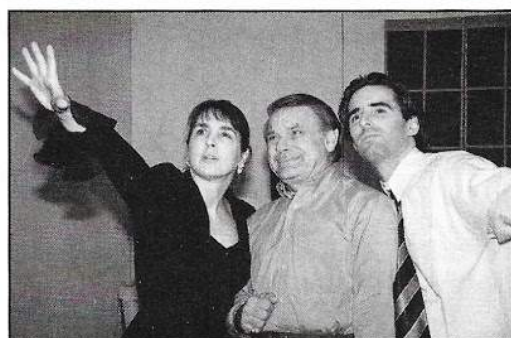
Yes, that's right; we neglected to acknowledge Ron Borst (that's Ronald V. Borst of Hollywood Movie Posters to those who read our teensy photo credits) for the fun-filled shot of Charles Starrett being whipped by Myrna Loy's minions in *THE MASK OF FU MANCHU* (1932). Since we have no desire to be whipped (at least on a workday), we hereby tender our apologies and promise that it will never, ever happen again.

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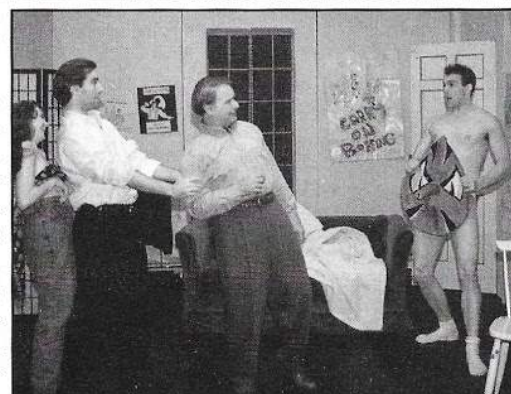
Those of you who read the advert on the back cover of Issue #23 know that my comedy, *A PIECE OF CAKE*, was presented in New York this past January by the Doctor Guffy Theater Company, under the direction of *Scarlet Street*'s own Kevin G. Shinnick and producer John Stanisci, Paul Weissman, and Ljubisha Milenkovic. It was a very successful production and we even managed to be dubbed the Comedy Pick of the Week in the *New York Post* (which obviously didn't mind the ribbing it suffered at our hands).

*A PIECE OF CAKE* has been performed before, in Boston, Minneapolis, and Paramus, New Jersey, but this incarnation was more fun than a barrel of wine with Vincent Price floating upside down inside. Three cheers to cast members John Stanisci, John Barba, Angela Jane Ford, Kerry Dolan, Peter Timony, and Craig Bachmann for putting on one helluva show. There's talk of a direct-to-vid version of *A PIECE OF CAKE* being made in the coming months, so, as good ol' Abe Van Helsing said when faced by a tombful of vampires, you can be sure I'll keep everyone posted.

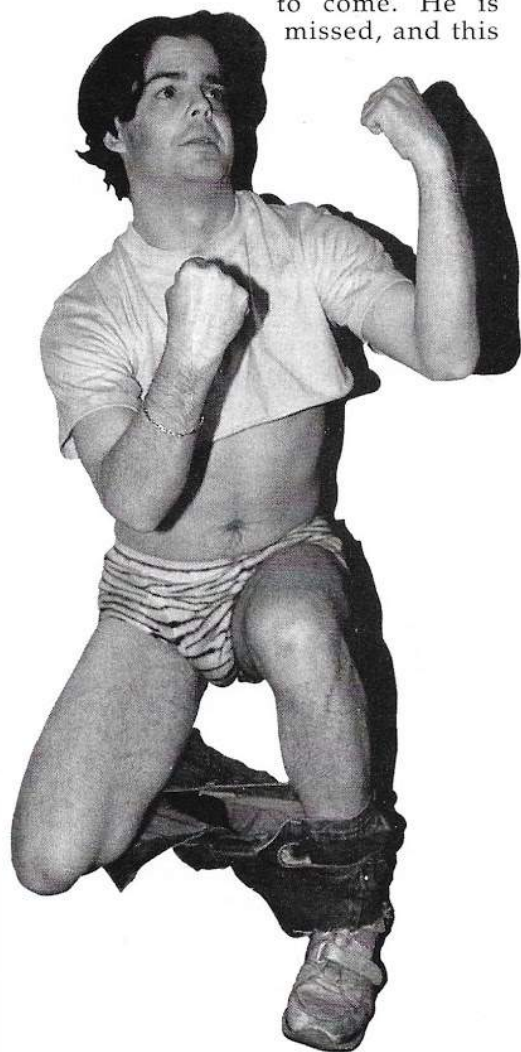
Richard Valley



Photos: Elmor Bernstein



LEFT: Anxious gay activist Bobby Kaufman (Peter Timony) is ready to put up a fight, though he's neglected to protect his rear. TOP: Diana and Barrie Farrington (Angela Jane Ford and John Stanisci) bedevil horror star Charles Straitaway (John Barba). SECOND PHOTO: Bobby lays one on confused bisexual Casey Corker (Craig Bachmann). THIRD PHOTO: Diana meets budding actress Cindy Dickler (Kerry Dolan), a nude cutie who talks like Elmer Fudd. BOTTOM: Casey exposes himself to ridicule!



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## SCARLET LETTERS

*Continued from page 8*

sades and the invasions of Mongolians into Europe in the Middle Ages (particularly the 14th century), but the specific "Yellow Peril" scare campaign started in Germany in the 1890s. This epithet, along with similar ones such as "slant-eyed devils" used in the Fu films, dehumanized and demonized the "Asian hordes" that the fear-mongers imagined were preparing to invade and conquer Europe with battle cries such as the one Mank quotes from Fu: "I will wipe out your whole accursed white race!" To Caucasians a century ago, eradicating a "Yellow Peril" sounded as righteous as exterminating noxious vermin.

The racist rhetoric reached a bombastic frenzy in 1900, when the Boxer Rebellion (in many respects a trade war, despite the propaganda that made it sound like a holy mission) pitted Chinese, some of them crusaders for national sovereignty, against an international army of Europeans. The anti-Asian slanders of the "Yellow Peril" campaign resembled, in both tone and specifics, the Blood Libel (the lie that Jews

use the blood of Christian infants in religious rituals) that the Nazis later exploited to try to justify murdering Jews. The "slant-eyed devil" stereotype portrayed Asians as sadistic monsters like Fu, with no regard for human life. Therefore, the reasoning went, "we" (the white guys, the "good" guys) should slaughter without mercy, with no regard for these "subhuman" Asians' lives.

"Yellow Peril" was not ancient history to Sax Rohmer when he wrote his first Fu novel in 1913, or to the makers of *THE MASK OF FU MANCHU*, released only 32 years after the Boxer Rebellion, as recent to them as the 1965 escalation of the Vietnam War is to us. Nor is the "Yellow Peril" scare ancient history to Asians living today, who listened to grandparents and great-grandparents talk about what they experienced during the Boxer Rebellion. Also, at that time, the United States enforced an immigration law that brought Chinese men here as "coolie labor" but denied entry to wives and children, on the theory that Chinese families might—gasp—breed, and overrun white America. Try to dismiss "Yellow Peril" as old news

to a Japanese American who lived in a concentration camp here in the United States during World War II. Our government confiscated property from and imprisoned not only suspected spies, but loyal citizens and their young children, without a shred of evidence. Many of those innocent American citizens could not even speak Japanese, yet the government took the official stance that "clannish" Asians would feel more loyalty to their Japanese kin than to their own country.

Mank seems to think that we can now enjoy the Fu films without guilt because times have changed enough to make the racist material irrelevant, an historical artifact of the Bad Old Days. Unfortunately, he's mistaken. Some of the cultural paradigms have shifted, but "Yellow Peril" thinking lives on, right here in the United States. Many black and white Americans still irrationally loathe and fear Asians.

On May 19, I read an article by Rene Sanchez and Sue Anne Pressley, on page one of *The Washington Post*, about the abolition of racial preference quotas at the University of California and the University of Texas. The long article men-

tions Asians only once, to say that where affirmative action has ended, "the number of white and Asian American students . . . has risen sharply," without explaining that existing affirmative action programs promote enrollment of blacks and Hispanics (who suffer under another stereotype, that of incompetence, to such an extent that racists now think it's safe to pretend to encourage them to go to college) while actively discriminating against Asians by keeping Asian enrollment down to a specified percentage. Otherwise, the theory goes, "super-smart" and "workaholic" (read: "inhuman") Asians will overrun our nation's overwhelmingly white colleges.

In my old California neighborhood, school kids still use "Yellow Peril" (along with other taunts such as "chink" and "slope") as fighting words. Participants in recent race riots in L.A. and Washington, D.C., trashed and burned Asian-owned businesses, and beat up Asian shopkeepers, in the belief that Asians were "taking over" black neighborhoods. The Fu Man-

chu films play into these stereotypes in a way that's not old-fashioned or quaint, but still timely and perilous.

Freedom of speech in this country extends to racists the same as to anyone else. Therefore, yes, let's preserve those films, uncensored. Let's comment on them, put them on magazine covers, and enjoy what's good about them. They're a part of our cultural heritage. But make excuses for them? Never.

Lelia Loban  
Falls Church, VA

Simon Templar being my favorite fictional hero for more than a decade, now, I was a little apprehensive about THE SAINT with Val Kilmer. Having now seen it twice, I can happily report that it acts as an "untold origin" story. The Saint' fans know from books, movies, and TV finally comes into being in the film's last 10 minutes—most notably when (in disguise) he sits down right next to Chief Inspector Teal (unnamed in the film; only in the credits) and we hear the theme of the Roger

Moore TV series playing! (Moore himself supplies a newscaster's voiceover as the credits roll.) So far, THE SAINT is my favorite film of the year!

THE NIGHT STALKER wasn't the only show to suffer mutilation in syndication. All of Ron Ely's TARZAN two-parters were not included, and worse, the entire first season of Dennis Weaver's MCCLOUD were reedited in a fashion identical to KOLCHAK.

I've been interested in MASK OF FU MANCHU ever since Forrest J Ackerman cover-featured it way back in *Famous Monsters*. What a wild tale of its making! Now, if only that uncut laserdisc weren't packaged with three other films—at its current price, you'd really have to want it bad.

By the way, thanks for the run-down on the Fu Manchu books. I just reread my entire collection of *Master of Kung Fu* and this helped my understanding of Fu's history (which is referred to extensively) quite a bit.

I believe Marc Lawrence actually played gangsters in three James

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In other words, a beautiful blend of old-fashioned booga-booga complete with a steamin' striptease and a surprisingly bare-breasted vampire babe.

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Bond films. He was one of the members of the "hoods' convention" in *GOLDFINGER*, he threw Lana Wood off a balcony in *DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER* ("I didn't know there was a pool down there."), and he was used as target practice in *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN*. How could you forget?

Henry R. Kujawa  
Camden, NJ

That's Richard Alexander to the left of Sen Yung on page 64 (SS #24). Born in Dallas, Texas, on November 19, 1902, he started out with a bit role in *OLD IRONSIDES* (1926). He played Westhus in the classic *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT* (1930) and was in many films throughout the '30s. (He's even in 1936's *REEFER MADNESS* as Pete.) But it is in the following serials that he left his mark: *FLASH GORDON* (1936, as Prince Barin), *S.O.S. COAST GUARD* and *ZORRO RIDES AGAIN* (both 1937), *FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS* (1938, again as Barin), and *SEA RAIDERS* (1941). From *THE LAW OF THE WILD* (1934) to *JESSE JAMES*

*RIDES AGAIN* (1947), he was in at least 12 serials! How about doing one of your great career interviews or at least a career profile?

H. Pfeffer  
Bronx, NY

Well, can you tolerate one more letter on the (hushed whisper) . . . agenda?

My only real concern was that a magazine of such (dare I say) integrity was beginning to sound less and less like the magazine of mystery and horror and more and more like *Hollywood Babylon*. Or the *Tattler*. Or the *Enquirer*, from the halcyon days of the '60s with the infamous headlines of "Baby-sitter kills charge! Parents find grisly meal on table!"

Whether someone is gay/lesbian/straight/celebrate is a matter of little or no importance to me . . . unless you are discussing the ruined and devastated careers of such unfortunates as Tommy Kirk or Sal Mineo. The willful destruction of Mr. Mineo's career is not merely a crime against him and gay men everywhere, but against all who enjoy the craft of screen acting, especially when elevated to

the art form as seen in Sal's criminally limited body of work.

When I think of Mineo, I can only shake my head, for his is a case of the most terrible notion of all: that which might have been.

In Issue #24, the evil of racism is mentioned in the wonderful Fu Manchu articles, and there is a rich mine of things to rage against as well. James Earl Jones is, in my less than humble opinion, the best voice in the business, a brilliant and gifted talent, and he is usually trapped in lesser works, in minor roles. I won't even go near the criminal neglect of Denzel Washington, whose performance as Malcolm X was not only Oscar-worthy, but a performance for the ages.

Let us not neglect the talents of those who are going to be forgotten because Hollywood—and you may quote this straight white male—is run by homophobic racist morons. Let us pay homage to the great talents and the gifts of entertainment they have given us for so many years.

James R. Allard  
address withheld

Great work on issue #24, which I read cover to cover on a recent trip to the Midwest. (This is not, I hasten to add, a swipe at the entertainment value of the heartland.) I especially enjoyed the interviews with Sheldon Leonard and Marc Lawrence, although the conversation with Lawrence seemed criminally short; why no mention of DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER? Or PIGS? Or, man alive, KING OF KONG ISLAND?

My humble thanks for the Fu Manchu coverage. I too read the books as a punk kid and now feel a ticklish ambivalence about their merit in an, ahem, enlightened society. Genre magazines need more of the kind of point/counterpoint perspective offered by Reditor Richard Valley's and Jeff Siegel's FU! FU! . . . FOOEY!!! Greg Mank's production history of THE MASK OF FU MANCHU was fascinating; as usual, Mank does his exhaustive, compelling best. And THE CHILDREN OF KONG: PART TWO made for an amazing, colossal read.

In parting, I'd like to add yet more kindling to the gay agenda debate by cautioning both *Scarlet Street* and its readership against

trampling the fine line between that which is commonly known (however contestable) and that which remains, at best, hearsay. I confess I'm alarmed that reader Harry M. Benshoff took Anne Baxter's comments about rumors of Vincent Price as confirmation of anything, especially in light of the fact that these were rumors of sexual relations with minors.

As much as we want our celebrities to stand in for us and reflect and flatter our prejudices and preferences, as desperately as we want to identify with them, let's all be careful and just a bit more discriminating (in the best sense of the word) in what we accept as fact. All we really know, after all, is what's up there on the screen.

Richard Harland Smith  
New York, NY

*In the interest of accuracy, it must be pointed out that the late Anne Baxter's remarks included no reference whatsoever to Vincent Price or George Macready having sexual relations with minors. The exact quote: "This producer said that he'd cast young actors who had admitted they'd had threesomes with Mr. Price and Mr. Macready." We all know that most ac-*

*tors are well into their forties before they'll even consider relinquishing the adjective "young."*

A rather belated letter, but I just purchased a copy of the January issue (SS #23), so . . .

This issue had a number of articles which caught my attention. I particularly liked Paul Mandell's article on the underscore for PLAN 9. His experience tracking down the background music for that film is similar to what I am experiencing trying to locate the original music used as library cues for Columbia's Sam Katzman flicks of the '50s. I'm getting some assistance from the Internet, but I have a long way to go. If he has any suggestions, I'd be glad to hear them.

Steve Randisi states in his article JUNGLE GEMS that footage from BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON was used as stock footage for BOMBA AND THE ELEPHANT STAMPEDE. Is that simply his conclusion or does he know this for a fact? I had reached the same conclusion, but so far I have not been able to verify it.

Incidentally, the photo on page 72 is not from LOST VOLCANO,

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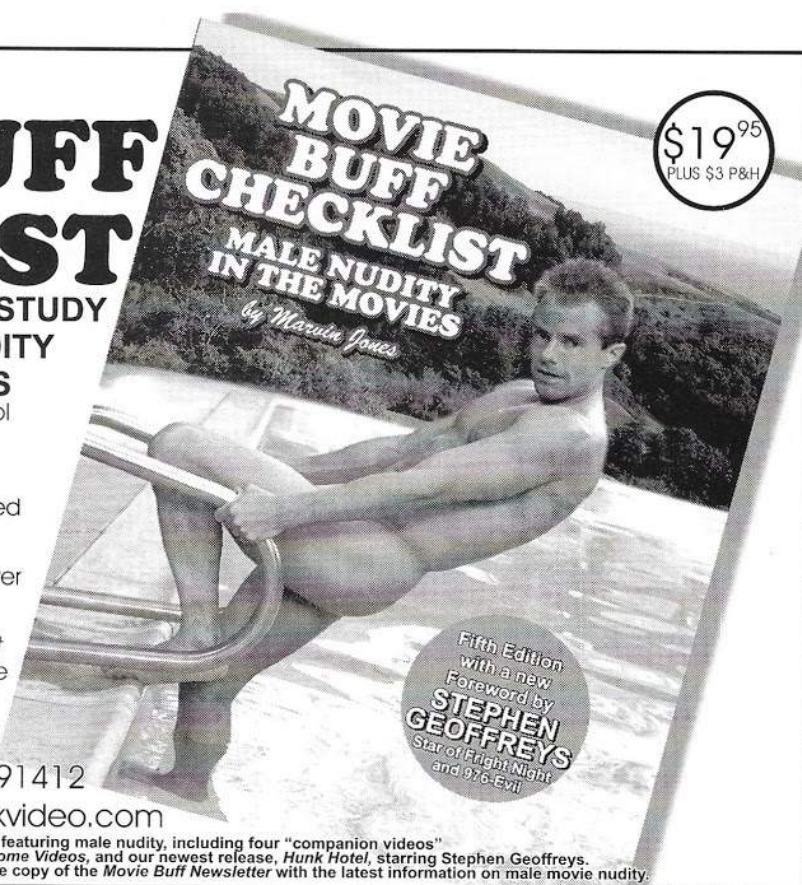
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but rather from *AFRICAN TREASURE* (1952), and the lovely lady is Laurette Luez, not Elena Verdugo.

Finally, in the article on Sherlock Holmes, reference is made to Guy Haines. Was he a professional Hollywood whistler? Where can I find more information on him?

Geoff St. Andrews  
[gstandrews@sympatico.ca](mailto:gstandrews@sympatico.ca)

*Actually, it was Ye Reditor himself who added the (correct) Bomba info to Steve Randisi's article and the (incorrect) caption to the photo. As for Guy Haines, he is, appropriately for these pages, a man of mystery . . .*

I especially enjoyed your recent article on Irish McCalla (SS #23). It was intriguing to hear that she was (and is) so independent and that Hollywood had no big control over her destiny. She can be admired for that. I liked her comments on women's lib and I think she's right! Thanks for the spicy photos, too. One last comment: if you take a full-length photo of Irish (in skimpy attire) and squint at it, to me she looks like the model for the Barbie doll! Check it out!

Gary Wray  
Tarzana, CA

In Issue #24, you did a tremendous disservice to the memory of Robert Drivas, who died tragically of cancer in 1986. You published a nude photo of him in his second film, *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN* (1969) and, then, in an accompanying caption, went on to denigrate his nudity.

In that film, when its star, Rod Steiger, playing the title role, was revealed in his naked, tattooed state, it was a truly grotesque sight—but, at the end of the film, when the camera caught Robert Drivas in his unclothed splendor, it was breathtaking, overwhelming, and memorable.

Robert Drivas' movie career began impressively (*COOL HAND LUKE*, *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN*, *WHERE IT'S AT*), but he probably wasn't interested in a film career. He seemed much more devoted to the theater, where he often existed thrillingly on stage. Among his many unforgettable performances: his tortured son in Terence McNally's first play, *AND THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT*, his unexpectedly hilarious turn in McNally's *WHERE HAS TOMMY FLOWERS GONE?*, and his an-

guished young man, going from 15 to 30, in Mart Crowley's exploration of Michael's (*THE BOYS IN THE BAND*) earlier life in *A BREEZE FROM THE GULF*.

When he turned to directing plays, he had a great success with Terence McNally's outrageous farce, *THE RITZ*—and, indeed, he should've been allowed to do the film version. (Richard Lester destroyed the material.)

Anyway, I wanted to take the time to remember Robert Drivas and to correct your memory of his second film.

Raymond Banacki  
Brooklyn, New York

*Whew! Strong words, Raymond—but in this instance, at least, our memory needs no correcting. The "denigrating" caption ("Robert Drivas skinnydips, but proves he hasn't a patch on THE ILLUSTRATED MAN") meant nothing more than the pleasantly obvious fact that, unlike the title character, Drivas had no tattoos ("patch").*

Hello, *Scarlet Street*! Issue #24 is wonderful! First of all, it looks like a classic *Scarlet Street* issue. Great cover! Maybe those color shots were just too jarring.

The big article on THE MASK OF FU MANCHU by Gregory William Mank is, to me, what *Scarlet Street* has always been about. I think Mank is one of the very best writers on historical movie subjects working today. His contributions to the MagicImage book series have been phenomenal. His thorough research, little-known facts, and great quotes are why I read your magazine.

I'm also impressed with Part Two of THE CHILDREN OF KONG, always delighted by Forry Ackerman's column, and I just love SCREEN AND SCREEN AGAIN! Please don't lose that one! It's one of my favorite features in the entire mag. The pieces on Marc Lawrence and Sheldon Leonard are again classic *Scarlet Street*. I'm also equally impressed by your background research piece on the Fu Manchu novels and other movies.

Congratulations, Richard Valley, on your promotion(!) to publisher. Now, you really won't have any time for a real life! Your future issues sound spectacular. I'm looking forward to *Scarlet Street's* future. It should be well worth the subscription price.

And finally, in regards to your classified ads . . . Barkus is always willing.

Bill Shaffer  
zzshafCktwu.wuacc.edu

I'm glad that *Scarlet Street* is now back in top form, what with Jessie Lilley leaving. I know that SS will continue to deliver the goods, putting out the finest magazine of its class.

I enjoyed Roger Hurlburt's interview with the fine character actor Marc Lawrence (SS #24). It is always a delight when fine thespians such as Mr. Lawrence provide anecdotes and recollections on their fruitful careers, expletives notwithstanding. Praise should be given to the contributing writers of *Scarlet Street* (in this case, Mr. Hurlburt) for instilling the appropriate questions in order to furnish what the typical SS fan comes to expect.

My only complaint would be that Marc Lawrence wasn't asked about his more recent film venture, as the motel manager in the Robert Rodriguez-directed crime/horror movie FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. Mr. Lawrence was frail in

appearance, looking every bit of his 80-plus years; nevertheless, there was no mistaking those penetrating eyes of his. This immediately brought to mind his bandaged portrayal of gangster Steve McBirney, in the classic mystery CHARLIE CHAN AT THE WAX MUSEUM (1940).

Lawrence Nepodahl  
DeKalb, IL

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# the NEWS HOUND

Stop growling, Scarlet Readers! If the dog days of summer haven't been sufficiently sinister, here's The Hound with news that will fill the rest of your year with fear . . .

## For Your Spies Only

Perhaps you fear the idea of an AVENGERS movie starring Uma "Poison Ivy" Thurman as Emma Peel and Ralph "gestapo boy" Fiennes as John Steed. Well, the Warner Bros. feature has gained some '60s spy credibility with the casting of Sean Connery as the leading diabolical mastermind. Plus, Patrick Macnee will be on hand for a cameo. Filming on the ultra-psychedelic flick is even now underway in swinging London, with aging bad-boy Sean demanding a rape scene for himself and Uma. Meanwhile, stateside cable TV viewers can catch the real thing every week on the Encore Mystery and Movie Plex channels.

Speaking of the real thing, the Hound has scolded his spies (they're now out in the scold) and corrects some previous info. The new James Bond film is titled TOMORROW NEVER DIES, not AVATAR (which the Hound preferred). Super-suave Pierce Brosnan is busily Bonding as we speak, and he shares the screen with Jonathan Pryce as a villainous media mogul, tasty Teri Hatcher as Mrs. Mogul, and the spectacular Michelle Yeoh (Jackie Chan's SUPERCOP costar) providing plenty of kicks as Bond's fearsome fellow agent.

## Watch This Space

Once again we've been bombarded by summertime sci-fi flicks. Still more are about to orbit your local bijou: MIMIC (Dimension) features giant, mutated cockroaches that can masquerade as humans (no, it's not a documentary about

lawyers) . . . EVENT HORIZON (Paramount) is an outer-space mystery starring Laurence Fishburne, Kathleen Quinlan, and Sam Neill, who investigate the eerie return of a deserted starship . . . Futuristic drama GATTACA (Columbia) concerns genetic engineering, and stars grunge hunk Ethan Hawke and the ubiquitous Uma Thurman . . . A murdered soldier returns to join the devil's platoon in SPAWN (New Line), based on Todd McFarlane's comic-book series. When he calls for donations to the Damnation Army, you better give till it hurts . . . Two more big-budget sci-fi films

post-Mulder move to the big screen this fall in the medical thriller PLAYING GOD (Touchstone) . . . Peter O'Toole battles a murderous ancient spirit in PHANTOMS (Dimension), adapted by Dean Koontz from his novel . . . I Scream of Genie: an evil djinn is unleashed in WISHMASTER (Live Entertainment), featuring horror hit-men Robert (Freddy) Englund, Tony (Candyman) Todd, Reggie (PHANTASM) Bannister, and Kane (Jason) Hodder.

Kevin Sorbo, TV's HERCULES, stars as buff barbarian KULL THE CONQUEROR (Universal), based on the books by Conan author Robert E. Howard . . . The independent action drama RAISING HEROES, about a man and his partner targeted by the mob, features "the first gay action hero," according to its producer (who obviously hasn't heard those rumors about Bruce and Dick) . . . Dueling doomsdays: next year two movies feature the annihilation of Earth by killer asteroids—ARMAGEDDON (Touchstone) starring Bruce Willis and DEEP IMPACT (Paramount/DreamWorks), a Spielberg production based on George Pal's WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE . . . SUPERMAN LIVES (but are the Bros. Warner living dangerously?) with Nicolas Cage as the (horse-faced and balding) man from Krypton. Possible costars: Sandra Bullock as Lois Lane, Jim Carrey as Brainiac, and Jack Nicholson as Lex Luthor. What's this, no Marlon Brando? The horror, the horror . . .

## Deja Views

Werewolves bungee-jumping off the Eiffel Tower? Yes, this and other scary sights are on display this August in the horror-comedy sequel AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS (Hollywood Pic-



THE AVENGERS are at last coming to the big screen, but it won't be Diana Rigg and Patrick Macnee as Emma Peel and John Steed.

should fly this fall: ALIEN RESURRECTION (Fox) and STARSHIP TROOPERS (TriStar).

## Future Features

Basketball star Shaquille O'Neal tries on a superhero uniform (and ends up looking like a blue-gray Michelin man) as the DC Comics crimefighter STEEL (Warner Bros.) . . . David Duchovny makes his first

Continued on page 18

## THE X-FILES

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"The Host"

Vol. Eight: "Sleepless"/"Duane  
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Breath"

In this third group of X-FILES episodes released to laserdisc, Fox Video has chosen a good cross-section of shows highlighting memorable "monsters of the week" and intriguing explorations into the continuing mythology of government and alien agendas.

Although it's not necessary to have seen previous episodes to enjoy these entries, the opening show on the first disc—the Season Two premiere "Little Green Men"—picks up where the final first-season episode "The Erlenmeyer Flask" left off. FBI Special Agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) has been permanently deprived of the inside dope offered him by the shadowy government informer "Deep Throat." Not only that, the entire X-Files division (unsolved, paranormal cases) has been shut down, with Mulder and his partner Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) split up and reassigned to comparatively dull duties.

Senator Matheson, Mulder's powerful Capitol Hill patron, gives the agent a lead on what may be Earth's first documented contact by extraterrestrials. This sends Mulder on a trip to a NASA installation in Puerto Rico, and on a personal trip to memories of 20 years ago, when he witnessed his younger sister's apparent abduction by aliens. It's an action-packed episode that includes the deadly pursuit of Mulder and Scully by the rumored Air Force "Blue Beret UFO Retrieval Team."

"The Host," one of the series' most celebrated "monster" episodes, takes a cue from 1950s sci-fi by introducing a creature evolved and mutated by radioactivity. The corpse of a Russian sailor exhibits a bizarre wound that Scully likens to the bite of a parasitic fluke—only monstrously large. The Flukeman, or "Flukey" as the producers and fans have dubbed him, has spawned his own collectable figurine, and was portrayed by

actor-writer Darin Morgan, who later scripted some of the series' most popular (and decidedly quirky) episodes.

Tony Todd, the expressive player whom horror fans know as CANDY-MAN, plays Vietnam veteran Augustus Cole in the tense and well-directed entry "Sleepless." Cole and others in his platoon took part in medical experiments that removed their need and ability to sleep. The alteration of Cole's brain has allowed him to wreak unusual vengeance on those who caused his condition. This episode is filled with great supporting performances, and introduces two characters: Mulder's new partner Alex Krycek (Nicholas Lea, interviewed in our previous issue), and the informant known as "X" (Steven Williams)—the much grimmer successor to "Deep Throat."

X-FILES creator Chris Carter stepped into the director's chair with "Duane Barry," which features Steve Railsback in the title role of a former FBI agent and escaped mental patient. Barry claims to have been repeatedly abducted by aliens, and in a fearful frenzy has taken a hostage that he hopes to exchange with "them." Mulder's expertise in such fringe matters makes him the perfect choice to negotiate with Barry, whose story he comes to believe despite evidence that Barry's brain damage makes him violent and duplicitous. Matters go horribly wrong when Barry again escapes and takes yet another hostage—Agent Dana Scully.

The drama concludes in "Ascension," an exceptional episode in which Mulder pursues Duane Barry and the imperiled Scully to a mountaintop in Virginia. A harrowing sky-tram ride to the summit is sabotaged by Agent Krycek—who we learn is in the employ of Mulder's nemesis, "Cancer Man." Mulder's empathy with Barry in the previous chapter turns to rage when he discovers Scully has vanished in what Barry claims was an "exchange" with the aliens.

Dana Scully inexplicably returns in "One Breath," a striking and emotional episode that is less an X-File than a dreamlike musing on irretrievable loss and on the relation-

ship between the two lead characters. Comatose and critically ill, Scully is ministered to by her family members and a hospital staff at a loss to explain either her arrival or her condition. Mulder struggles to find who and what is responsible for his partner's illness, and has memorable encounters with conspiracy mavens The Lone Gunmen, the lethal, enigmatic "X," and the pitiless Cancer Man.

Collectors will probably not mind that the two-parter, "Duane Barry" and "Ascension," is spread over two separate discs; most fans will be buying all three volumes anyway. As with earlier editions in the series, Fox offers excellent picture quality and surround stereo, and includes at least 14 chapter stops per episode. Beware: series creator Carter introduces each show with detailed comments on plot and production that will spoil the fun for new viewers. Watch the intros afterward instead.

—John J. Mathews

# INSIDE THE X FILES



In "Little Green Men," Mulder (David Duchovny) finally meets up with the title characters, but Scully (Gillian Anderson) returns from an encounter of an even closer kind in "One Breath."

# TARZAN FINDS A home!

**A**fter years of banishment from the television jungle, Tarzan, Lord Greystoke, has finally found a new home on American Movie Classics.

This past June, AMC held a three-day tribute to the Lord of the Jungle, running 32 Tarzan adventures and a brand-new documentary, *INVESTIGATING TARZAN*, hosted by Brenda Fraser. (Why Fraser? Well, he is playing *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* in a new film from Disney.) The movies featured nine actors out of the 21 who have played Tarzan: Elmo Lincoln, Johnny Weissmuller, Buster Crabbe, Herman Brix (Bruce Bennett), Glenn Morris (pictured with Edgar Rice Burroughs), Lex Barker, Gordon Scott, Jock Mahoney, and Mike Henry. The titles include such action classics as *TARZAN AND THE MATE* (1934), *TARZAN'S GREATEST ADVENTURE* (1959), *TARZAN THE MAGNIFICENT* (1960), and *TARZAN'S THREE CHALLENGES* (1963). The 52-minute documentary includes interviews with Denny Miller (whose one epic, an excruciatingly poor 1959 remake of 1932's *TARZAN THE APE MAN* is not part of the AMC package), Gordon Scott, Maureen O'Sullivan, and a confusing array of Canadian citizens who know nothing about the subject.

Following the marathon, AMC premiered *TARZAN THEATER* on Sunday afternoons, returning the

Ape Man to the traditional day he had once graced on TV stations across the country.

Meanwhile, in another part of the forest, Xavier DeCie has signed to replace Joe Lara on the syndicated series *TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES*, where the tales have proved to be less than epic.

The 32-year-old actor/model begins filming 22 shows in South Africa this summer for airing in the fall. Word has it that Jane will at last be joining her primitive man on the show. Now if they'd just get Tarzan out of those clunky boots and into a trimmer loincloth . . .

And in yet another lush jungle glade, Disney is preparing an animated, musical Tarzan scheduled for release in 1998.

—Drew Sullivan



## NEWS HOUND

*Continued from page 16*

tures). Other sequels in the works: *SCREAM AGAIN* (Miramax), is Wes Craven's follow up to you-know-what. Apprentice scream queens Neve Campbell and Courtney Cox will return, along with potential new screamers Sarah Michelle Gellar (TV's *BUFFY*) and Reese Witherspoon (terrific in the very rentable *FREEWAY*) . . . The lovely, loose, and lethal alien hybrid Natasha Henstridge returns in *SPECIES 2: OFFSPRING* (MGM). But this time she's a good guy, sent to track an overly-amorous male alien hybrid. Gee, it sounds a lot like the plot of the upcoming *ALIEN: RESURRECTION*. A mere coincidence, we're sure.

Retreads . . . er, remakes on the horizon: *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* (Disney), featuring monkey maven Rick Baker's effects . . . *FANTASTIC VOYAGE* (TriStar) from the producers of *INDEPENDENCE DAY* and next summer's *GODZILLA* . . . *CARNIVAL OF SOULS* (Trimark), produced by Wes Craven . . . *X: THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES* (DreamWorks) from director Tim Burton . . . *THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR* (MGM), Pierce Brosnan's next mission after the

new Bond . . . and a slew of swipes from Sir Alfie Hitchcock: *TO CATCH A THIEF* (possibly starring Harrison Ford and Sandra Bullock), *BLACKMAIL*, *SPELLBOUND*, *STRANGERS ON A TRAIN*, and *REAR WINDOW* (Christopher Reeve's return to acting). You may want to wait for the real thing: *REAR WINDOW* will soon receive a restored rerelease from Universal, just like *VERTIGO*.

### The Amazing Colossal TV Set

. . . That's what your local cinema screen has turned into, what with so many new features based on small-screen shows. The '60s sci-fi fave *LOST IN SPACE* is currently in production at New Line, with William Hurt and Mimi Rogers in the Guy Williams and June Lockhart roles, and Gary Oldman playing it straight as Dr. Smith. Warner Bros. is due to start *THE WILD, WILD WEST* in October with veteran alien fighter Will Smith an off-beat choice as Federal Agent James West. Other shows making the move to the big screen include *HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL* (possibly starring John Travolta), *MY FAVORITE MARTIAN* (maybe with Matthew Perry and John Cleese), *THE MOD SQUAD*, and *GET*

*CHRISTIE LOVE!* Feature-length tests of the Emergency Broadcast System may be next.

### Television Terrors

Are you an X-Phile who needs a bigger phix? Well, you can get phive times your phill starting August 19. That's when the FX cable network starts showing reruns of *THE X-FILES* five times a week, Monday through Friday, at 8:00PM (ET & PT). Episodes will be shown in their original order starting with the first season, and each will be repeated on the following weeknight at 11:00PM. If you don't get the FX channel on your cable system, notify your local FBI branch of a possible conspiracy.

Meanwhile, *THE X-FILES* returns to the Fox network for its fifth and perhaps final year. (Yeah, right.) Scully and Mulder will be back this fall, alive and kicking and hopefully a lot less gloomy, with a new caseload, including one frightening file penned by Stephen King. Once season number five is over, the TV audience will opportunistically be told to march to the movie theater with cash in hand—next year's cliffhanger finale will be resolved

*Continued on page 20*

# Chasing More Tales

You wouldn't know it to listen to Showtime, but the cable TV station's production of MORE TALES OF THE CITY has begun filming in Canada, with location work to follow in San Francisco. The confirmation comes directly from the author's mouth: Armistead Maupin recently spoke with *Scarlet Street* about the long struggle to get the TALES OF THE CITY sequel filmed and on the air.

It's been three years since England's Channel Four, in partnership with PBS, broadcast TALES OF THE CITY, a three-part miniseries based on the first volume of Maupin's six-book set of San Francisco adventures. The gay-friendly program, starring Olympia Dukakis as the transsexual landlady Mrs. Anna Madrigal, Laura (CONGO) Linney as Mary Ann Singleton, Marcus D'Amico as Michael "Mouse" Tolliver, Paul (DUE SOUTH) Gross as Brian Hawkins, Chloe Webb as Mona Ramsey, and Bill (ROCKETEER) Campbell as Jon Fielding, was a ratings hit and went on to cop a 1995 Peabody Award. Nevertheless, PBS passed on MORE TALES OF THE CITY with the claim that they had never committed to a sequel, and denying that they had caved in to pressure from such right-wing groups as the Reverend Donald Wildmon's American Family Association.

Speaking with *Scarlet Street* in the summer of 1994, Maupin said, "The script was completed and we were hearing very positive noises from the national headquarters of PBS. Obviously, this decision [to cancel the sequel] was made by the new PBS president, Ervin S. Duggan, who is a Bush appointee to the Federal Communications Commission. Mr. Duggan is on record as saying he wants 'only decent family values' upheld on television—which means that he doesn't want to hear about any lifestyle other than that of Christian Fundamentalism."

Happily, public television's act of moral cowardice no longer matters. "MORE TALES OF THE CITY starts shooting on July 16 for about two months," Maupin recently reported. "It's scheduled for airing on Showtime in the Spring of 1998. It's kind of hard to believe it's happening, but it is!"

*Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror* weathered some complaints over its coverage of the first series ("Where the mystery? Where's the horror?"), but, unlike those unfamiliar with the books, we knew that the Hitchcockian elements of TALES were destined to erupt into a full-blown thriller in MORE TALES. It is in this installment that Mary Ann meets "the amnesiac of her dreams," Burke Andrew, a man straight out of the Master's SPELLBOUND (1945) and the pseudo-Hitchcock MIRAGE (1965). During the course of the story, there are blood sacrifices, missing body parts, and even a cryptic poem with clues to the solution of the mystery:

High upon the Sacred Rock  
The Rose Incarnate shines,  
Upon the Mountain of the Flood  
At the Meeting of the Lines.

For a miniseries that takes place primarily in the City by the Bay, very little of the program will actually be lensed in the United States. "We'll be shooting exteriors in San Francisco and then trick up the rest," said Maupin. "There's not going to be a lot of work done here. We're moving the Barbary Lane set, which was in Silver Lake before, onto the same soundstage where WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? and THE KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE were filmed. When I found out that both of those movies had been shot in this little tiny studio, I knew we had all the right ghosts going for us."

—Richard Valley

It's been a long while coming, but the philandering Beauchamp Day (Thomas Gibson), pictured on the left with Laura Linney as sexual conquest Mary Ann Singleton and on the right with Bill Campbell as sexual conquest Jon Fielding, at last gets his comeuppance in MORE TALES OF THE CITY.



## NEWS HOUND

*Continued from page 18*

in the currently-shooting X-FILES feature film.

Glen Morgan and James Wong, former producers of THE X-FILES and SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND, hope to debut a new Fox series this fall entitled THE NOTORIOUS SEVEN. It's a stylized film noir "comic book for adults" about seven big-city crime families, patterned after the seven deadly sins. (The lust family might be fun, but stay away from that gluttony gang.) Will it last seven deadly episodes? Let's hope so. In addition to Morgan and Wong, Emmy-winning X-FILES writer extraordinaire Darin Morgan is contributing scripts.

It looks like DARK SKIES, NBC's flashy entry in the alien ratings race, has gone dark permanently. Replacing it on Saturday nights is the new sci-fi drama SLEEPWALKERS, in which scientists at the mysterious Morpheus Institute enter people's dreams and muck about. Can you say "VR.5?" We knew you could. Joining DARK SKIES in the TV circular file are Fox's SLIDERS, UPN's THE BURNING ZONE, and ABC's remarkably self-destructive LOIS AND CLARK, which made the grievous mistake of marrying off its title characters.

The ID4 production team of Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich bring their spacy expertise to the Fox network this fall with THE VISITOR, airing Friday nights right before the returning MILLENNIUM. John Corbett (of NORTHERN EXPOSURE) plays a World War II pilot who, after being abducted by aliens, returns to earth in 1997. Upon seeing his first Chris Farley movie, he immediately returns to outer space.

The Showtime pay-cable channel offers two new series inspired by feature films. THE HUNGER, co-produced by Tony and Ridley Scott, is Showtime's answer to HBO's TALES FROM THE CRYPT, presenting half-hour pulp horror stories introduced by a "morphing" host. STARGATE SG-1 stars Richard Dean Anderson as Jack O'Neil, the character played by Kurt Rus-

sell in the 1994 MGM feature film STARGATE.

Robert Pastorelli, former home decorator and babysitter on MUR-



Henry Hull howls again when the WERE-WOLF OF LONDON (1935) and a pack of other Universal Horror classics find their way into rerelease.

PHY BROWN, plays a police psychologist in ABC's new fall series CRACKER, based on the popular Granada cop drama... Fledgling network UPN will add THE THURSDAY NIGHT SCI-FI MOVIE to its schedule this fall. No word yet on whether these will be TV-movies or theatrical features... Newcomer T.W. King stars in TIME-COP on ABC, based on the Dark Horse comic-book character and the Jean-Claude Van Damme feature... DC superheroes THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA will be featured in a CBS telefilm, and possibly in an upcoming series... Throttle Me Elmo? Jim Henson Productions and NBC have coproduced a pilot for a new vampire horror series THE VAN HELSING CHRONICLES.

### MYSTERY! Date

Public Television's incomparable MYSTERY! series begins its 18th season this October, bringing a new lineup of British detective thrillers to viewers across the pond. In the

new telefilm DEEP SECRETS, Colin Sampson (of PRIME SUSPECT) plays a police detective who goes undercover to snag a European mob boss, and ends up falling for the boss's ex-wife (L.A. LAW's Amanda Donohoe).

Patricia Routledge of the popular BBC comedy series KEEPING UP APPEARANCES stars as the "anti-Marple" in the four-episode series HETTY WAINTHROPP INVESTIGATES. She plays a feisty 60-year-old Lancashire housewife who opens her own detective agency.

MYSTERY! brings back Sir Derek Jacobi as CADFAEL, the medieval sleuth in sackcloth, in three new 90-minute features. John Thaw also returns as Inspector Morse in two new mysteries, "The Daughter of Cain," and "Death Is Now My Neighbor," adapted from Colin Dexter's latest Morse novel. Thaw also stars in a one-shot thriller INTO THE BLUE, portraying a nouveau-poor businessman-turned-waiter who's drawn into mystery and mayhem on the Greek island of Rhodes. While waiting for the new season to start, MYSTERY! fans can keep their little gray cells active with en-

core broadcasts of POIROT, starting late July and running through mid-September.

### The Home Video Vault

August is Monster Month for fans of Universal horror movies, with the 1940s Inner Sanctum series making its video debut with three double-bills priced at \$14.98 each: WEIRD WOMAN/THE FROZEN GHOST, CALLING DR. DEATH/STRANGE CONFESSION, and DEAD MAN'S EYES/PILLOW OF DEATH. The Junior Lon Chaney stars in every feature, supported by the likes of Evelyn Ankers, Acquafredda, David Bruce, J. Carroll Naish, Patricia Morison, Ralph Morgan, Elizabeth Russell, Anne Gwynne, and Elena Verdugo. Want more? MCA Universal is rereleasing their entire series of Universal and Hammer classics, including BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, BRIDES OF DRACULA, THE MUMMY, THE RAVEN, THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE, THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF, THE PHANTOM OF

# Heaven Knows, Mr. Mitchum

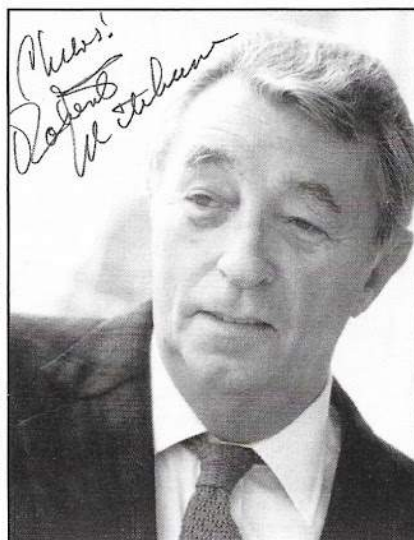
*Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

—Requiem, Robert Louis Stevenson

I'd chosen the poem for the back of my father's mass card when he died in 1991, a poem I'd first heard in connection with the 1960 Robert Mitchum movie *HOME FROM THE HILL*. Mitchum was best known, of course, as the hunter from a film of a darker color: *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* (1955), in which he played the homicidal preacher, Harry Powell.

Robert Mitchum died in his sleep on Tuesday, July 1, 1997, after a yearlong battle against emphysema and lung cancer. Among his many other memorable motion pictures: *THE STORY OF G.I. JOE* (1945), *CROSSFIRE* (1947); *OUT OF THE PAST* (1947); *HEAVEN KNOWS, MR. ALLISON* (1957); *THUNDER ROAD* (1958); *CAPE FEAR* (1962); and *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY* (1975).

—Richard Valley



*THE OPERA* (both the Rains and Lom version), *HOUSE OF HORRORS*, and many more.

Harlan Ellison considers it one of the best science fiction films ever made, and it's finally available on video: John Frankenheimer's chilling 1960 drama *SECONDS* (Paramount, priced for rental). Rock Hudson is cast brilliantly against type as a man who goes to frightening lengths to reinvent himself. (Or is that against type?) James Wong Howe's powerful black-and-white photography and Jerry Goldsmith's unnerving score help to make this an unforgettable film.

Billy Wilder's terrific wartime spy thriller *FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO* (Universal, \$14.98) has also debuted on video; Franchot Tone, Anne Baxter, Erich von Stroheim, and Miklos Rozsa's music star amid the Sahara sands . . . More contemporary thrills await, too: high-profile horrors *MARS ATTACKS* (Warner Bros.), *SCREAM* (BV/Dimension), and *THE RELIC* (Paramount) have recently debuted on the rental racks . . . Universal has dropped the price of the suspense thriller *FEAR* and Joe Dante's enjoyable B-movie tribute *MATINEE* to \$19.98 and \$9.98 respectively.

Fans of '60s Euroshlock horror will love the new uncut release of the 1960 Italian feature *THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE* (Something Weird Video, \$20) . . . Those who want to prep for Jim Cameron's new fall feature can do so with A&E Home Video's absorbing four-part documentary *TITANIC*, now available in a boxed

set for \$59.95 . . . Mystery writer Max Allan Collins has written and directed *MOMMY 2: MOMMY'S DAY*, a direct-to-video sequel to his 1995 thriller *MOMMY*. Patty (BAD SEED) McCormack again stars in this Eagle Video release, with Mickey Spillane in macho support and TV vets Paul Petersen and Gary Sandy on hand . . .

More long-sought horror flicks are finally showing up on video. New to tape are *THE HEADLESS GHOST* and *HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM* (\$19.99 each from VCI), the slithery slimefest *SSSSSSS* (Universal, \$14.99), and '60s Hammer classics *DRACULA—PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, *THE REPTILE*, *PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES*, and *RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK* (Anchor Bay, \$14.98 each) . . . The new direct-to-video animated feature *BATMAN AND MR. FREEZE: SUBZERO* (Warner, \$14.98) is already on the shelves amid this summer's renewed Batmania. Animation fans may also want to pick up Disney's limited release of *THE JUNGLE BOOK* in October, and the homevideo sequel *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: THE ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS*, coming in November . . . Rescued after several years of video oblivion, Hitchcock's 1944 classic *LIFEBOAT* will again float your way this December for \$14.98.

## Fearsome Flotsam

Vienna Boys Choir, watch your throats! Vampires will soon be singing (and winging) beside you! Roman Polanski is premiering a musical stage version of his 1967

film spoof *DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES* (known in the USA as *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*) at Vienna's Raimund Theatre. Rock composer Jim Steinman provides the sanguinary score. The show opens in October and is expected to run through next summer . . . Fellow Scarlet Streeter Forrest J Ackerman will be aghast of horror at the Monster Bash Convention on July 18, 19, and 20 in Ligonier, Pennsylvania . . . Soundtrack fans will love *FANTASTIC TELEVISION* (GNP Crescendo, \$12.95), a CD collection of 28 TV themes from cult faves such as *UFO*, *SEAQUEST DSV*, *FOREVER KNIGHT*, *V*, and *THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.* . . . Play it again, Sam: *MURDER IS MY BEAT* (Turner/Rhino, \$15.98) is a new CD featuring music and dialogue clips from *LAURA*, *THE BIG SLEEP*, *MURDER MY SWEET*, *THE MALTESE FALCON*, and many other film noir classics . . .

Gone but never to be forgotten: producers Alexander Salkind and Tomoyuki Tanaka, director Fred Zinnemann, designers Jean Louis and Sidney Guillardoff, horror host Ernie "Ghoulardi" Anderson, announcers Bill Kennedy and George Fenneman, film technician Bud Abbott Jr., and actors William Hickey, Brian Keith, Joey Faye, Barry Evans, Don Porter, Ronald Howard, Richard Jaeckel, Philippe DeLacy, David Doyle, Diana Lewis, Robert Ridgeley, John Beal, Joan Blair, Pat Paulsen, Paul Lambert, Gail Davis, Wesley Addy, Alvy Moore, and Jesse White.



# Our Man on Baker Street

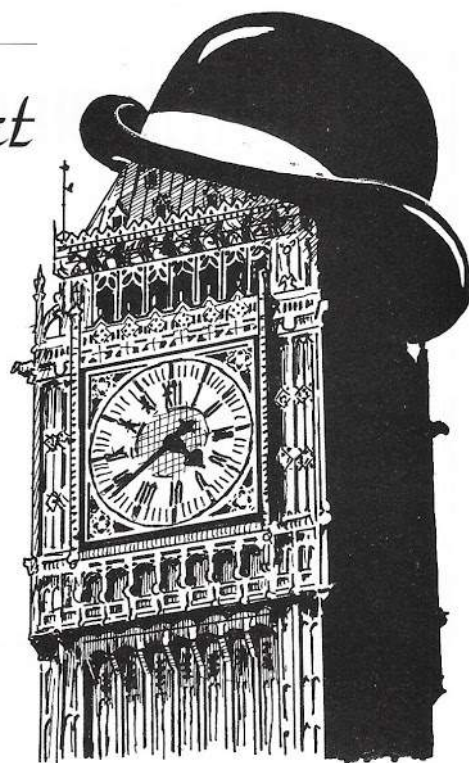
## by David Stuart Davies

### Another Final Bow

The fact that Ronald Howard passed away this year with hardly anyone noticing is perhaps not too surprising. He had not acted in over 20 years and his body of work was fairly undistinguished. He will probably be remembered by most merely as the son of lovely Leslie Howard, Hollywood superstar and the Ashley Wilkes. Ronald's facial resemblance to his father and the same easy charm in his performances probably were something of a curse to Howard junior. I know from talking to Edward Hardwicke, whose father Sir Cedric flashed his dour countenance in a whole series of films in the '30s and '40s—even playing Dr. Frankenstein in Universal's *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1942)—that the sibling shoulders an awful burden, straining for recognition in the large

shadow cast by the great parent. Indeed, when a very young Edward Hardwicke was taken by his father to see the grand old man of British theater, George Bernard Shaw, the playwright warned him: "Don't go on the stage, young man. All you will achieve is being recognized as the son of Sir Cedric Hardwicke." That damning observation has stayed with Edward all his life, and we can imagine Ronald Howard sharing this stigma. In his choice of roles and in his performances you can almost see Howard giving up, saying that this is the best the son can do.

Ronald Howard was born in 1918 and went to Cambridge—but not straight away, you understand. He was clever, but not that clever. He worked as a journalist before the outbreak of the war. During the conflict he served in the Navy, taking part in the D Day landings. Up to this time, he had shown little interest in acting, but when his father was killed in 1943—the plane in which he was traveling was shot down by the Germans—there was a sudden interest in the son. Could Ronald possibly take his father's place? Attempts were made to persuade him to change his name to Leslie Howard, Junior. To his credit, Ronald refused. He was given a leading role in the 1946 comedy *WHILE THE SUN SHINES*. The pedigree is impressive: produced by Anatole de Grunwald, written by Terence Rattigan, and directed by Anthony Asquith. However, it was a weak, undistinguished affair. Significantly, after this flop, Howard rushed



off to Windsor Rep to learn how to act on stage. For this brief period, he called himself Ronald Martin.

By 1949, he was back in movies, appearing in such motion pictures as *THE QUEEN OF SPADES* (1949), *THE BROWNING VERSION* (1951), *GIDEON'S DAY* (1958), *MURDER SHE SAID* (1961, opposite Margaret Rutherford as Miss Marple), Hammer's *THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB* (1964), and *PERSECUTION* (1974). He continued to act sporadically until the early '70s, when either the work dried up or he grew tired of playing second-string roles in mediocre films. He retired to Dorset. However, it was in the early '50s that Ronald Howard came closest to making his name a household word—because, for a short time, he became Sherlock Holmes.

At this time, the TV screens were awash with detective shows. The American radio and TV writer Sheldon Reynolds, a lifelong fan of the Great Detective, decided to cash in on this popular trend by making a Sherlock Holmes series. Having done a deal with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's son, Adrian, Reynolds sailed to England to look for his star. He realized the time was ripe to bring a fresh young Holmes to the screen. In Conan Doyle's works, we first meet Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) when he would be a man in his twenties and yet he is almost always portrayed on screen as being middle-aged,





© 1964 Columbia Pictures

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Ronald Howard as the Great Detective on television's *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*. **LEFT:** Howard (seated with Fred Clark and Jeanne Roland) is best known to horror fans as the hapless hero of Hammer's *CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB* (1964). **RIGHT:** Still, he wasn't quite as hapless as Clark, who had a fatal meeting with the Mummy (Dickie Owen) after dinner.

with his Watson racing toward senility. Eille Norwood and Arthur Wontner were in their sixties when they played Sherlock, while Basil Rathbone began in his later forties and ended up in his fifties. Since then, Peter Cushing, Christopher Plummer, and Jeremy Brett were all in their forties when they first played Holmes. Conscious of the youth market, Reynolds wanted to reverse the trend. When he interviewed the 35-year-old Ronald Howard, he knew he had his man. Sadly, he cast Howard Marion Crawford as Watson. Crawford was only four years older than Howard, but looked much older and certainly played much older: his Watson was from the Nigel Bruce school of huffing and puffing.

Reynolds produced 39 half-hour shows between 1953 and 1954 and to say they were made on a shoe-string budget would be an understatement. The series was filmed in Paris because it was cheaper than either Britain or the States. A small number of British actors played the leading roles, while the rest of the cast were French. Archie Duncan, who was later to play Little John to Richard Greene's Robin Hood in another TV series, was a dour, Scottish Inspector Lestrade. (Incidentally, Ronald Howard also showed up in *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD*, playing Will Scarlet in two episodes.) There was a

week's location shooting in England to provide a range of exterior shots for the whole series, but it rained heavily for the seven days and many of the shoots were unusable.

The Baker Street set was built inside the Poste Parisien Studios and very cramped and strangely gallic it looked. In watching several of the episodes, it is amusing to note that the lamp post on the set has a life of its own and moves up and down the street, appearing in different locations in different shows. In one episode, "The Texas Cowgirl," it disappears altogether to allow for a covered wagon to roll down the cobbled Baker Street.

Howard must have expected great things from the series, but surely his optimism was quickly doused. The scripts, many written by Reynolds himself or a group of expatriate Hollywood writers who were living in France after suffering from persecutions from the Un-American, were poor and often embarrassingly whimsical. Titles such as "The Baker Street Nursemaids" and "The Mother Hubbard Case" will give you an indication of their level. Episodes were shot in four days, which put a great strain on the leading actors. Howard was trapped in France for nearly a year making the series, which was never to be seen on British television, and, when he finished, he found he

had been forgotten by agents and audience alike. Ironically, the series was his most notable achievement and, although the shows are shoddy and third rate, his performance as Holmes is very likeable. He graces the detective with a youthful charm that is unique in screen presentations. For Holmes purists, he is too nice. He smiles and comforts, he looks serious at times, but he never glowers, rages, and reaches for the needle. He is a boy's comic paper Holmes.

The pilot episode, one of the best, is also unique in that it contains the only film presentation of the first meeting of Holmes and Watson at St. Bartholomew's Hospital—a version of the scene from *A Study in Scarlet*. We then see them moving into the Baker Street rooms and getting to know each other, neatly setting the stage for the future episodes.

Sadly, Ronald Howard was never given a second chance to play Holmes. Perhaps the French experience had warned him off the character for life. Now we shall never know, but it is pleasing to note that most if not all of the episodes of *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* are still available on video. They're not great, they may make you cringe occasionally, but they are good fun.



**Coming up in Scarlet Street: Sherlock Holmes on Radio!**

# SCREEN...



## and Screen AGAIN!



### Scarlet Street's Laser Review

**ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.**

FoxVideo

Two Sides: CLV

\$40

The 1966 Seven Arts-Hammer production, *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.*, marked Ray Harryhausen's return to the prehistoric milieu. Not since Irwin Allen's nature documentary, *THE ANIMAL WORLD* (1957), had the special-effects whiz enjoyed the challenge of bringing life to a variety of primeval behemoths on their own turf. Of course, he succeeded admirably, although there are those who maintain that *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* does not represent the animator's best work. Granted, the beasts on display here may lack the charisma of the Cyclops in *7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1958), nor boast the virtuosity of the skeleton-army battle sequence in *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* (1963), yet most stop-motion fans cannot help but be awed by such masterly set pieces as the battle between the Triceratops and the Tyrannosaurus Rex, Raquel Welch's abduction by the Pterodactyl, and the spectacular struggle between cave man and Allosaurus.

Those wishing to debate the merits of *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* would be wiser to take issue with director Don Chaffey and producer/screenwriter Michael Carreras. Drawing their inspiration from the 1940 Hal Roach classic *ONE MILLION B.C.*, which starred Victor

Mature and Carole Landis, they've one-bettered their source material in terms of riveting technical effects and a more sensationalized approach to the subject matter. But whereas the original version remains agreeably quaint and almost genial, the splashier remake possesses only a fraction of its predecessor's charm and, taking into consideration its campiness and heavy-handed approach, seems even more dated.

The rather slim plot follows the same basic pattern. John Richardson portrays Tumak, the son of Akhoba (Robert Brown, reprising Lon



Chaney Jr.'s role), leader of the brutal Rock Tribe. Having lost in a struggle for power against his father and equally bestial brother (Percy Herbert), Tumak is sent packing. Lost in the wilderness and near exhaustion, he is rescued by Loana (Raquel Welch), who belongs to the peaceful Shell Tribe. In a nod to Edgar Rice Burroughs, Loana attempts to civilize the stranger. The prehistoric couple ultimately succeed in bonding their tribes in a united front against the furies of nature.

With a considerable budget at their disposal, Hammer played for high stakes and won. *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* was an enormous success, both in the United Kingdom and in the USA, where the movie was released by 20th Century Fox in early 1967. Raquel Welch's scantily clad image, strategically placed in the foreground of all advertising art, was an asset. Her star was on the ascent at the time of the film's release, and her presence undoubtedly enhanced its drawing power at the box office.

Fox Video has done a commendable job in transferring *ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.* to laser disc. It's a beauty! The colors are sharp, the images generally crisp, and the aural values are satisfactory. (Mario Nascimbene's memorable, if repetitious, music score isn't diminished by the monophonic soundtrack.) The disc has been released in the letterboxed, widescreen format, doing justice to Wilkie Cooper's breathtaking vistas. Running a full 100 minutes, the laser restores approximately nine minutes of footage missing from the videocassette and heretofore shown only in Great Britain. Although we appreciate the disc's presentation in CLV (to keep the price down), we feel strongly that all of Harryhausen's films are worthy of the CAV treatment for closer analysis.

—John Brunas

#### DEMENTIA 13

The Roan Group

Side One: CLV, Side Two: CAV

\$49.98

Francis Ford Coppola paid Alfred Hitchcock the sincerest form of flattery with his 1963 bow as a writer/director. Produced under Roger Corman's Filmgroup banner, *DE-*

MENTIA 13 got lost in the shuffle of *PSYCHO* imitations that were flourishing in Hollywood at the time. Being released on a double-bill with Corman's infamous *THE TERROR* did little to increase its standing, and the fact that the film "borrowed" even more brazenly from the Hitchcock classic than most of its competitors didn't help, either. But, considering its next-to-nothing budget, the film is a surprisingly accomplished bit of filmmaking. Anyone interested in exploring the humble roots of Coppola's career is bound to come away impressed.

The narrative doggedly tracks its blonde protagonist (Luana Anders), who, like *PSYCHO*'s Marion Crane, is too caught up in her own criminal pursuits to notice she's marked for slaughter by a bashful young sociopath. When her husband suffers a fatal heart attack while canoeing at the family estate in Ireland, she desperately tries to conceal the accident and keep her status as heiress by tossing the body overboard. Repairing to her in-law's mansion, she finds the family glumly observing the anniversary of the death of the youngest daughter, who drowned under mysterious circumstances some years before.

After a few axe-murders (including an immaculately-executed beheading), the country doctor (Patrick Magee) belatedly deduces the identity of the psychopath, a diagnosis the audience had little trouble arriving at several reels earlier. (Coppola's script reveals him to be a bush-league mystery writer at best, equally inept at character development and motivation—although he has an obvious flair for literate dialogue and stark visuals.) Ghostly images of bodies floating lifelessly underwater and shock shots of the shadowy killer hacking away at his victims linger in the mind long after the particulars of the plot fade from memory. Like many first-time directors, Coppola plays it safe by evoking past masters, checkering the film with oblique references to not only *PSYCHO*, but *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* (1955), *CITIZEN KANE* (1941), and even *THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* (1942). The director's mastery of the camera and lighting is unmistakable

throughout and he has infused the film with enough style to pull a silk purse from Corman's sow's ear of a budget. The Irish locales provide a distinguishing look far removed from the Hollywood soundstage, though this is somewhat dissipated by the colorless lot of young play-



ers imported from UCLA. The dependable Ronald Stein composed the effectively tingly score.

The disc's lecture track, provided by the film's star, William Campbell, immeasurably adds to the viewer's appreciation of the movie. Claiming to be the only performer to actually receive a salary, Campbell obviously enjoys reminiscing about the long hours spent shooting on the grounds of an authentic Irish castle, the summer stock atmosphere of the production, and Coppola's infinite cunning in securing free goods and services. The Roan Group presents the film slightly letterboxed, using a satisfactory 35mm print for the transfer. Included is a campy theatrical trailer featuring a cue-card-reading doctor and "hypnosis expert," who warns patrons that no one will be admitted without passing a test to determine if they can withstand shock. The "test," reproduced from American International's press-book, supplements Tom Weaver's liner notes.

—Michael Brunas

#### YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

FoxVideo

Sides One, Two, Three: CLV, Side Four: CAV

\$89.95

No studio has had such an enduring impact on the horror film as has Universal. The Mummy, the Wolf Man, Dracula, and Frankenstein have sired offspring that continue to this day. Poverty row studios

tried and failed to match Universal's special qualities. Hammer created a voluptuous genre of its own, yet retained much of the lore introduced by Universal. In 1974, Mel Brooks and Gene Wilder met Universal head-on with a hilarious comedy that is also a loving homage.

Frederick "that's Frahnkensteen" Frankenstein (Gene Wilder), grandson and sole heir to the estate of the Baron Beuford von Frankenstein, considers all that is Frankenstein—the reanimation of dead tissue, the creation of life from that which is dead—as so much "doo doo." Convinced to leave his teasingly frigid fiancée (Madeline Kahn) and his conventional medical and teaching practice, he travels from America to Transylvania to take possession of Castle Frankenstein. There, cigar-smoking housekeeper Frau Blucker (Cloris Leachman) leads him to his grandfather's notes. Falling prey to the fate of all Frankensteins, and assisted by his faithful servant Igor (Marty Feldman) and his "assistant" Inga (Teri Garr), young Victor follows in his grandfather's footsteps to create . . . the Creature (Peter Boyle).

Boyle's Creature is a unique creation, softer and rounder in look



than Karloff's creature, often fierce but with a hint of playfulness the original monster never had. What follows are some marvelous take-offs on the most memorable Universal scenes, most notably the Creature's encounters with the flower-throwing little girl and the blind hermit (exquisitely played by Gene Hackman).

The film, in CLV and occupying Sides One and Two of the set, is presented in a 1.85:1 aspect ratio. Mel Brooks provides a continuous narration on the left analog sound track. His commentary provides insights into how particular scenes were constructed and who was re-

sponsible for an improvisation or an idea. The transfer is excellent, but don't look for the tonal range seen in high quality black and white transfers. YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN was intentionally shot starker than the norm, recreating the tones of the original films. Adding to this authenticity is the actual Frankenstein lab equipment, discovered in creator Kenneth Strickfadden's garage.

Side Three, in CLV, offers a wonderfully informative short, MAKING FRANKENSENSE OF YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN. Divided into chapters such as "Scripts" and "Sets and Lighting," this "how I did it" featurette provides a fascinating look into the methods used to achieve the final result. Trailers, television spots, and two Mexican television interviews complete the side.

Side Four, in CAV mode, contains a real treasure: seven deleted scenes. Two scenes are so key that they should have been left in the final cut. Here we discover why Victor inherited his grandfather's estate, and what, exactly, were those "intellectual discussions" Victor and Inga had. Side Four wraps up with outtakes, production stills, and the Transylvania station scene in Spanish, French, and Japanese.

One last note: we finally learn the unvarnished truth about the meaning of "Bluker."

—Michael Spampinato

**COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT/SILENT RUNNING**  
MCA Universal  
Four Sides: CLV  
\$69.95

This is a truly inspired double bill. Spawned by the fears of the '60s, these two films tweaked our paranoia perfectly. Not that we needed that much convincing, but after COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT and SILENT RUNNING, we were sure machines were taking over and man and/or nature were doomed.

COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT (1970), based on D. F. Jones' novel *Colossus*, tells a cautionary tale of surrendering control to machines, in this case the ultimate national defense system—a super computer that has total control of the U. S. nuclear missile force and

standing orders to keep the peace as best it can. Unfortunately for we poor humans, the self-aware machine decides that the best way it can do this is by subjugating humankind under threat of nuclear annihilation. And just to put the screws to us a little harder, the So-



viets' new defense computer happens to agree. Colossus is unreachable, impregnable, sealed within a mountain and cut off so securely that not even Matthew Broderick could hack in, so when the two computers start slinging ICBMs to make their point, we naturally capitulate—or at least, naturally, pretend to capitulate. Then begins a clandestine race to find a way to defang these all-seeing, fast-thinking Frankenstein's monsters before they can truly squelch all hope.

Eric Braeden is perfect as Forbin, creator of Colossus, who's always-in-control calm plays off wonderfully against the escalating world crisis happening around (and because of) him. Susan Clark costars as his assistant and co-conspirator against the machines. It's a notably undemanding role, but she's as pleasing as anyone could be in it. Also featured are Marion Ross and William Schallert, disconcertingly not playing anyone's parents.

As a teenager growing up in the Cold War, my first viewing of this film (probably cut to ribbons on ABC's 4:30 movie) left a lasting impression. To this day it's my favorite techno-thriller. Few films have presented a moment more ominous than when Colossus speaks to the public for the first time in its soulless electronic tones: "This is the voice of world control . . ." From the first moment Colossus starts making demands of its maker, through all of humanity's quietly tense machinations to regain control, to one of the classically frightening open-endings in film history,

COLOSSUS keeps one constantly on the edge.

While COLOSSUS cautions us against allowing machines to take over, SILENT RUNNING (1971) cautions us against defoliating the Earth. "Cautions" may be too subtle a word, actually; Bruce Dern as Freeman Lowell, the botanist/pilot of a space freighter, delivers a veritable sermon on the subject to his three crewmates early in the film. It seems that, in the next century, Earth has been paved over for that parking lot Melanie was singing about. The last forests have been transplanted into glass domes carried on American Airlines space freighters, which are tooling around in the outer solar system waiting, according to Lowell, for the time when people see how foolish they've been and decide to reforest the Earth. But since Big Business is in charge, the decision is handed down to put the freighters back into commercial service, and the crew is ordered to eject and blow up all the forests. The reasoning for this isn't too clear, but I suppose it's not dissimilar to what airlines do to most luggage. However, Lowell has invested years in this project, and, dammit, he's growing cantaloupes in Dome One!

Coming as no surprise to anyone, Bruce Dern goes crazy. He kills his crewmates and hijacks the freighter, managing to save one small, round forest out of all the Earth's flora. This he tends like a psychopathic Noah, while we are attacked by a sudden song from Joan Baez, which is almost as frightening as Bruce Dern in sackcloth carrying sharp tools.

SILENT RUNNING was the first film by effects master Doug Trumble, working on his own after ably assisting on 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Notable among the film's firsts (as far as I'm aware) are the first short, cute robots, cleverly portrayed by amputees walking on their hands inside the costumes. R2D2, Tweety on BUCK ROGERS, and that ridiculous stuffed toy on GALACTICA are direct descendants. What a legacy! If the film was intended as a conservation statement or an indictment of Big Business, it does in fact deliver that message, albeit briefly—and, unlike most of today's cinematic amusement park rides, it at least tries to

say something. More likely, though, those were mere plot devices, driving a film that was a mild character piece for Dern and a learning exercise for Trumble, who went on to special-effects glory on almost every other science fiction, sci fi, and fantasy film since.

For modern moviegoers who have trouble relating to science fiction without explosions, fear not; though actual onscreen killings are few, between the two films there are enough nuclear fireworks to make most everyone happy—the difference being that, when these movies were made, explosions were usually plot points rather than plot substitutes, and came at times in the story when their occurrence had an actual impact on the viewer.

The disks are packaged, one film per two-sided disk, in a fold-open cardboard sleeve with original poster art for both films, split-screen style, on the cover. Liner notes are sparse but include interesting quotes from choice cast and crew members (including Eric Braeden explaining his name change from Hans Gudegast, something I've always wondered about), as well as the usual chapter stop information. Since it's a two-disk set, the sides are numbered One, Two, Three, and Four, even though Three and Four are in reality a whole different movie than One and Two. I always wonder what they're thinking of when they do that.

Both films are presented in letter-box format in typically crystal-clear laserdisc picture and sound quality. The side break in *COLOSSUS* is perfectly placed, almost launching one off the couch to get that disc flipped and see what comes next. The side break for *SILENT RUNNING* is equally well placed, though coming at a lull in the action, and is a good time to go get a snack.

—John E. Payne

#### THE FLY

FoxVideo  
Two Sides: CLV  
\$49.98

The bromide of the scientist who secretes himself in his laboratory, subjects himself to his own ungodly experimentation, and finally

emerges as an unrecognizable man—thing gets a thorough workout in this 1958 classic. In its day, the so-old-it's-new plot reaped a bonanza for 20th Century Fox and the film went on to spawn two sequels and even a well-regarded remake. Yet praise for this highly entertaining and even moving film is often grudging at best.

As to be expected, *THE FLY* has the usual flaws found in even the more critically unassailable titles that fans and writers seem ever eager to embrace. Kurt Neumann's direction is sometimes clumsy—but, come to think of it, so was Fred McLeod Wilcox's work in *FORBIDDEN PLANET* (1956). The monster design is, in retrospect, disappointing—but no more so than the "vege-man" of *THE THING* (1951) or the hairy hydraulic ants in *THEM!* (1954). And in terms of acting and writing, *THE FLY* easily has it over the celebrated *WAR OF THE WORLDS* (1953), *INVADERS FROM MARS* (1953), or any of the Alland/Arnold collaborations.

What makes *THE FLY* something of an oddity is its uneasy mixture of James Clavell's sentimental script and Neumann's cold, clinical direction. A science-fiction novice, Clavell sought to get away from the cut-and-dry characterizations usu-



ally associated with the genre. Instead, his script contains characters who genuinely care about each other, providing an idealized but believable romance for the tragic hero Andre Delambre (Al "David" Hedison) and his wife (Patricia Owens), as well as such sensitive personages as a doting brother-in-law (Vincent Price) and an unusu-

ally genteel investigating policeman (Herbert Marshall). While such priorities are made at some expense to pacing, they also give added weight to a sense of tragedy, especially when Owens aids in her monstrous husband's destruction under an industrial press.

Neumann can't bring much life to the cloying scenes of domestic bliss, but savors the sadism when the horror goes full steam. While Clavell plays on the audience's sympathy, Neumann, an old Hollywood hand, plunges headlong into the shock value of the material, injecting an incongruous jolt of '30s Grand Guignol at every opportunity. Staging the scientist's demise under the giant press with enough oozing blood for a decade of Hammer Dracula movies, Neumann is mindful to include such macabre details as the victim's arm twitching lifelessly. The famous spider-web scene, too, is directed with a flair for ghoulishness. It's not enough that the miniaturized hero is left squealing in terror as he about to become a meal for the advancing arachnid; Neumann holds the action until the spider has engulfed its victim and has obviously began chomping before both creatures are put to death. It's a particularly jarring touch, especially in an era when it was far less fashionable for a romantic leading man to be disposed of with such bizarre cruelty.

Benefitting from a crisp transfer and terrific Dolby AC-3 encoding, this long overdue letterbox edition is an unabating pleasure. Completing the package is a tantalizing theatrical trailer hosted by a properly horror-struck Price at his portentous best.

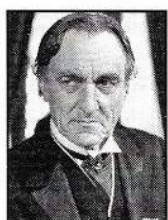
—Michael Brunas

#### THE VAMPIRE LOVERS

Orion/Image  
Two Sides: CLV  
\$39.99

A free-wheeling adaptation of Sheridan LeFanu's "*Carmilla*," *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS'* major claim to fame is that it brought '70s permissiveness to Hammer studios, allowing their usual lineup of bosomy starlets to finally burst out of their Victorian corsets. It also

*Continued on page 78*



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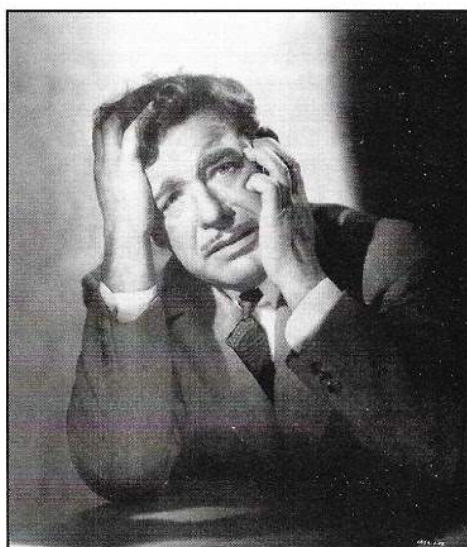
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# BATMAN and ROBIN

## A Bat=Chat with Joel Schumacher

by Richard Valley

**F**unny thing about Batmovies: well before the latest one is released, fans are already battling over the next one. Who should direct it? What should it be about? And, inevitably, which villains should be on hand to make life hell for the Caped Crusaders?

When *Scarlet Street* spoke to director Joel Schumacher on the eve of *BATMAN FOREVER*'s release in 1995, we asked him who he had in mind for the baddies in the inevitable sequel. He said he had no idea. Several days later, he called back and turned the tables: who did we have in mind for the follow-up?

Well, now, yours truly not only had the bad guys penciled in; I had an entire plot ready to roll! It involved Mr. Freeze, Poison Ivy, and Professor Hugo Strange, and it culminated in the resurrection of the Joker as Batman's primary foe. (We wouldn't actually see the Joker in my story, mind you, but it would set him up to reappear in the Batmovie following the *BATMAN FOREVER* sequel.)

Imagine my delight when I learned that two out of three of the villains I'd picked were actually set to "star" in *BATMAN AND ROBIN*! Naturally—and with deep humility—I mentioned this to the busy filmmaker when he called to discuss this new film. There was ever so slight a pause, and then Joel Schumacher chuckled:

"You know, I didn't have the heart to tell you that I'd chosen them because of my six-year-old godson. They're the ones he wanted, too. I didn't know if

you'd find that charming or insulting, but I was going to e-mail you and say, 'Bingo! That's who my godson suggested, and I think that's pretty amazing.'"

Proving it doesn't take much more than a six-year-old to either come up with a movie cast or put out a *Magazine of Mystery and Horror*, which admittedly is pretty amazing—and charming, too.

There remained a plethora of very deep issues to discuss about *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, though, so we plunged right in, generating this response to perhaps the most pointed question of all:

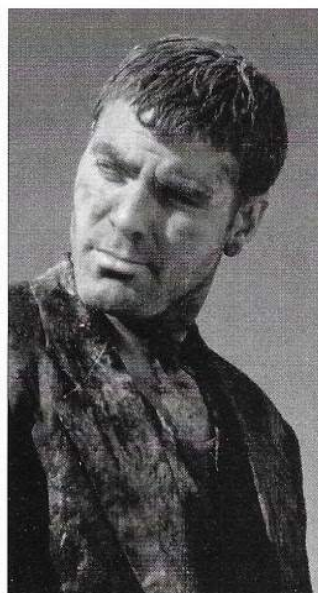
"Batman and Robin definitely have nipples on their costumes, and, since we're an equal opportunity film, Batgirl has nipples, too—but they're subtler. We tried to make her costume with exactly the same nipples the boys have, and though I know some part of the audience would have enjoyed it, it seemed exploitative. So hers are modified."

The nipples under scrutiny belong to Alicia Silverstone, who debuts as Batgirl Barbara Wilson (not Gordon, as in the comics) in the latest installment of the long-running Batseries. Joining her in Warner Bros.'s *BATMAN AND ROBIN* are George Clooney as Bruce Wayne (taking over from Val Kilmer), Chris O'Donnell as Dick Grayson (called Dick by Bruce only once in the new flick, and clearly with more than one meaning in mind), Arnold Schwarzenegger as Mr. Freeze (top-billed, just as Jack "Joker" Nicholson was in *BATMAN*), Uma Thurman as Poison Ivy,

**LEFT:** The Boy Wonder (Chris O'Donnell) gets a new costume in *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, the latest in the long-running Batseries. **CENTER:** Director Joel Schumacher chills out with lead villain Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger). **RIGHT:** The costume gets a new Batman in the person of TV star George Clooney.







**In Search of the Batchin:** Michael Keaton (LEFT) played the Dark Knight in *BATMAN* (1989) and *BATMAN RETURNS* (1993), Val Kilmer (CENTER) took over in *BATMAN FOREVER* (1995), and George Clooney (RIGHT) dons the cowl in *BATMAN AND ROBIN*. Below: Has Chris O'Donnell found his Robin costume as crotch-scratchy as Burt Ward used to find his?

Michael Gough as Alfred Pennyworth, and Pat Hingle as Commissioner James Gordon.

Following their leads, the characters of Julie Madison, Dr. Jason Woodrue (sometimes known as the Floronic Man), and Bane step out of the pages of *Detective Comics* in the persons of Elle MacPherson, John Glover, and Jeep Swenson, respectively.

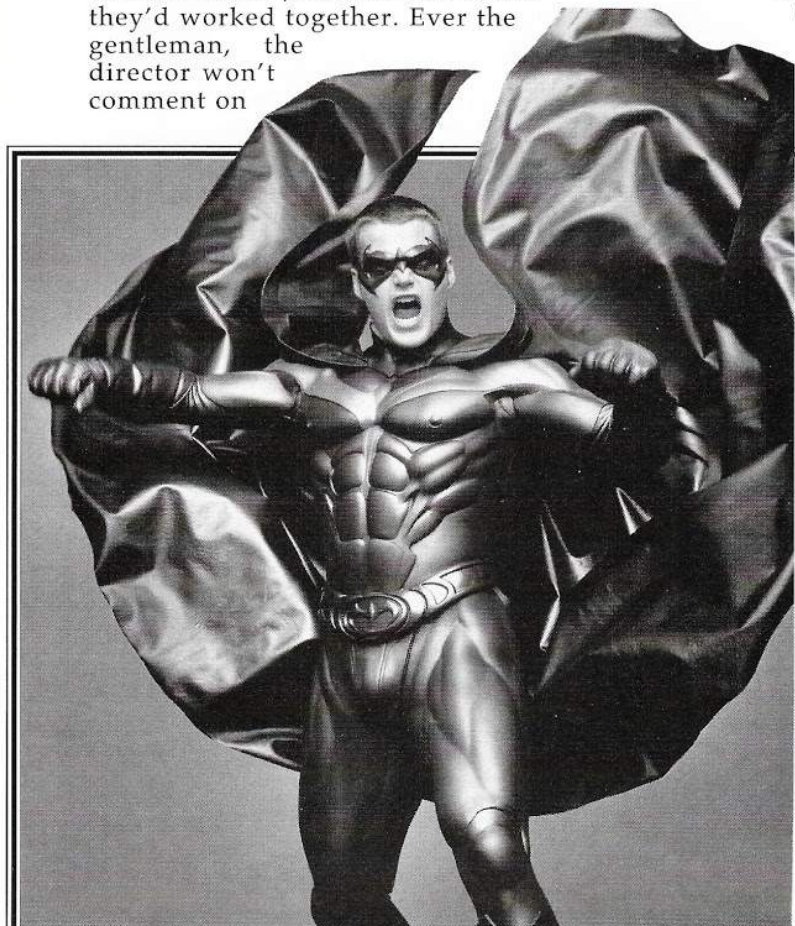
Previously, Joel Schumacher had raved about Val Kilmer inheriting the role of the Dark Knight from Michael Keaton, but that was before they'd worked together. Ever the gentleman, the director won't comment on

his troublesome former star, preferring to concentrate on the charms of his present one.

"Oh, we love George! George is very handsome and looks wonderful. In the costume, he looks very much like the classic Batman of the comic books. He has that great jaw and extraordinary eyes. I don't want to take away from Keaton or Kilmer, who I thought were excellent, but to me George is the best because we've moved away from the self-centered, brooding, my-parents-are-dead, somewhat narcissistic Batman.

George is 36 years old. If you had a friend whose parents died when he was eight and he was still obsessing about it at 36, you'd say, 'You've got to move on.' And as we know, the secret of moving on is thinking of others, not just yourself. So in *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, Alfred is going through a crisis—and Alfred is really the parent that Bruce Wayne knows—and Batman's also got this young man living with him who's his partner and is headstrong and reckless and confrontational. Then suddenly this teenage girl appears. On the surface, she seems to be a proper boarding school girl, but she has a dark night life in the bowels of Gotham. So Batman has other people to think of beside himself—plus saving the whole city, plus being torn between Poison Ivy and Julie Madison. He doesn't have a whole lot of time to obsess."

In the past, Batman hasn't had a whole lot of time to do anything in his own films, because he's rarely been in sight. (Reportedly, that's why Keaton walked out on the profitable franchise.) Not this time, though. "Batman gets quite a bit of screen time. The villains, of course, are phenomenal characters, but they all interact. Ensemble is a very comfortable way for me to work; if you look at my movies, they're ensemble pieces. We had a huge cast in *A TIME TO KILL*, and *BATMAN FOREVER* was an ensemble movie."



*Continued on page 37*

# ROCKIN' ROBIN

## Johnny Duncan

interviewed by Danny Savello

**B**atman wore a girdle and his ears kept falling off. Robin wore a Halloween mask and had a tattoo on his right arm. But, in 1949, Robert Lowery and Johnny Duncan were the Caped Crusaders. Sometimes billed as John, sometimes as Johnny, young Duncan was a short, good-looking Missouri boy who made good in Hollywood in a string of low-budget programmers, an occasional A picture, and one memorable 15-chapter cliffhanger. Here's his story, as told exclusively to *Scarlet Street* . . .

**Scarlet Street:** With the new *BATMAN AND ROBIN* opening this summer, we naturally wanted to speak to one of the stars of the original *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, the 1949 Columbia serial.

**Johnny Duncan:** Well, that's good. You're talkin' to one! (Laughs)

**SS:** You were the second actor to play Robin the Boy Wonder, the first being Douglas Croft in the 1943 serial *BATMAN*.

**JD:** I think Douglas Croft is dead. Yes, I think he died—I heard—in the '70s. Now it's been many years, and I just haven't heard anything from him or anything about him.

**SS:** How did you get the part in the second serial?

**JD:** Well, Sam Katzman, who produced the *East Side Kids* and the *Bowery Boys*—I used to play in a lot of those pictures. So he knew me and cast me as Robin. At the time I was 26 years old, but I photographed like I was 16 or 17.

Even at 26—I was married and I had a small daughter—even at 26, I used to go down to the corner drugstore where I lived in Hollywood, and buy *Batman and Robin*. I was really a fan. I'd buy a 10-cent comic book and come home and read, 'cause we had no TV in those days.

**SS:** Now we have TV and no 10-cent comic books!

**JD:** Anyway, Sam Katzman said, "We're gonna do *BATMAN AND ROBIN*." I said, "Great!" Then I didn't hear from him, and then I heard they were testing a lot of kids—I guess they went through a hundred or so, young guys. Finally I got a call from Sam, and he said, "John, will you come over here and satisfy Mr. Bob Kane. He's the guy

that draws this stuff and I've been tellin' him that you're the perfect Robin. But he says Robin is only 16, and 26 is too old. He won't even look at film on you! So come on over and dress young!" (Laughs) So I said, "Okay." I put on some levis and a sweater and I went over, and when I walked through the door, Kane yelled, "That's Robin! Who is this guy?" And Sam said, "That's John Duncan, the guy I've been trying to tell you about for three weeks, now." And so, that was the way I got Robin.

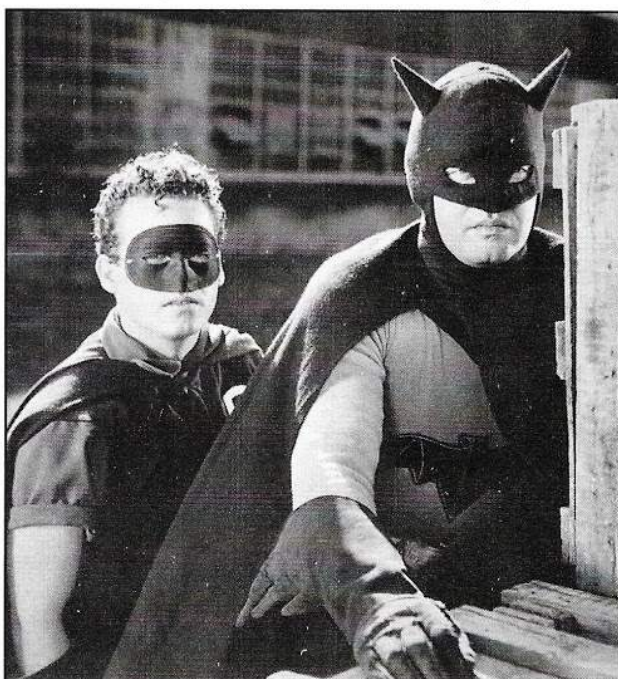
**SS:** You were cast as Robin opposite Robert Lowery.

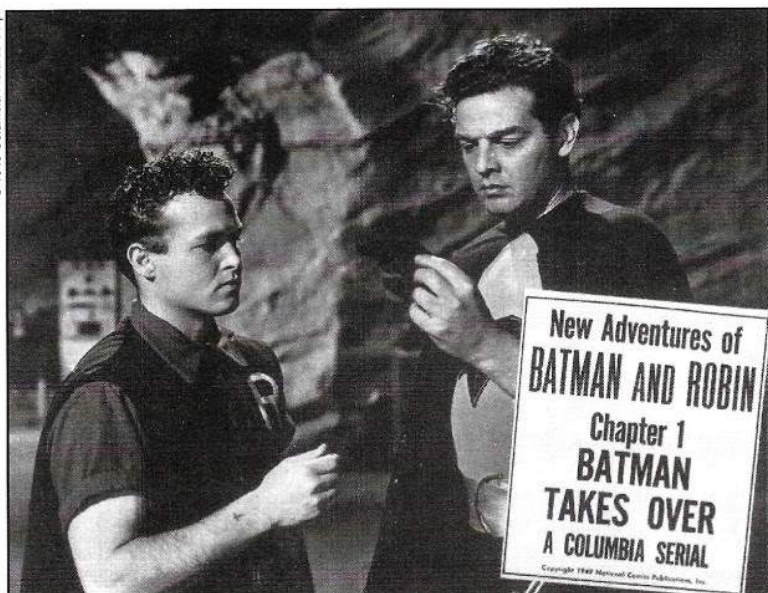
**JD:** Bob Lowery, the guy who played Batman, looked and sounded a lot like Clark Gable. He could really

imitate Gable. He was kinda heavy through the middle, though. He had a little pot there, and so we had to put a girdle on him. (Laughs) Every morning I used to go to his dressing room, next to mine. He'd call, "Hey! Duncan! Hey, come in here!" And we'd put this girdle on him. It was the kind of a girdle that the ladies wore in the 1800s, because it had strings on it, and I used to put it on from behind. He'd take a deep breath and I'd string up the girdle and tie it off. It'd be great until we started doing running scenes, and then he couldn't breathe! He'd start wheezin'! (Laughs)

**SS:** Not a very good thing for *Batman* . . .

**JD:** We had more fun on that picture, I swear to God! It





**LEFT:** Johnny Duncan's arm tattoo shows clearly in this shot from Chapter One of *BATMAN AND ROBIN* (1949), Columbia's second serial featuring the Dynamic Duo. **RIGHT:** A baggy Batman (Robert Lowery) points out a clue to Robin the (26-year-old) Boy Wonder.

was the experience of a lifetime, and we had no idea that they'd ever make anything like that again. We were shootin' 70 to 80 setups per day; we had two units working constantly, and we were doin' most of our own stunts. The second unit, they'd do run-throughs, so anytime we had to do run-throughs close to the camera, Bob would yell, "Cut! Tell 'em to cut! I can't breathe." And we'd loosen the girdle, because just wardrobe and the two of us knew that he was wearing one. *SS: You mean to say, Sam Katzman didn't know?*

*JD:* He didn't tell Sam, 'cause Sam had told him, "Well, you gotta lose a little bit of your gut, you know, there, Bob?" And Bob said, "Oh, yeah! Well, I'll go on a diet." Well, Bob loved to eat, you know—so we put on the girdle! (Laughs)

*SS: How fast was BATMAN AND ROBIN made? Was there any time for retakes?*

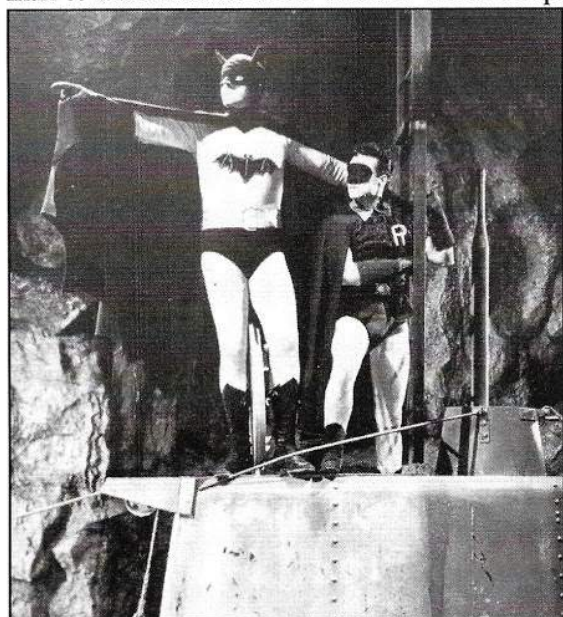
*JD:* I think the top was three takes. We didn't know the story half the time, because the writers were sending the script in pieces. When you're doing 80 setups a day, the script looks like a great big catalog

or something, you know? Like a telephone book! With the advertisements! We'd learn the lines that night and the next day they'd send in a whole bunch of changes! Besides, we were doing these setups so fast, a lot of the time we were ad-libbing! We were trying to stick to the script, but we were never sure of the dialogue!

*SS: That's amazing.*

*JD:* It was to us! (Laughs) We had six outfits. Our boots were made for us and that and the tights fit good, but Bob's head gear—his ears—they kept falling over! We used to

**LEFT:** The Dark Knight is still pointing out clues to his young ward in a later chapter of Columbia's *BATMAN AND ROBIN*. Presumably, they've already noticed the submarine beneath them. **RIGHT:** A fiery climax to a *BATMAN AND ROBIN* serial chapter.



have to scotch tape 'em on! We'd be doing dialogue and one of his ears would fall over. (Laughs) Then in the fight scenes, his damned cloak would get over his head and he couldn't see to hit the bad guy. Those were the kind of scenes that we had to do another take on . . .

**SS:** Yes, it wouldn't do to make *Batman* look foolish.

**JD:** When we got through, it was about 10 o'clock at night. We finished the picture. And when we finished, we dropped our outfits right in the middle of the floor and said, "We never want to see these damned things again! Never want to see them again!" You run around for 60 days with tights and a mask on, and you start to feel pretty damned dumb. Things go through your mind, like, "Jesus, nobody'd believe this. We're up here in the Hollywood Hills jumping at people's houses!" Bob said, "Can you believe this shit? What you won't do for a buck, you know?"

**SS:** Listen, it paid the bills, didn't it?

**JD:** It sure did! In those days, it paid a lot of bills!

**SS:** You did your own stunts when you made *BATMAN AND ROBIN* . . .

**JD:** Most all of 'em, yeah. I didn't do the jumpin' on top of the train, or runnin' on top of the train in Simi Valley.

**SS:** But everything else you did yourself?

**JD:** Everything else I did.

**SS:** Were there any accidents during filming?

**JD:** We had a Mercury convertible. I think it was a '49 Mercury; Ford gave us six of 'em, and we wrecked all six. Anyway, the top was up, but all the windows were down. The director said, "John, I want you to run and jump through the window, into the driver's seat. Bob, then I want you to jump in after John. Then he'll start the take off and we'll cut." So we said, "Okay." So I'm runnin'—we really did—we're livin' the part, you know? (Laughs) I jumped through the window, slid over to the other side, and I started the car real fast. Bob jumped in—it's a stick shift—and I let out on the clutch and Bob wasn't all the way in. His behind and legs were

stickin' out as I was makin' a turn and all you could see was his butt and his legs sticking out of the car!

**SS:** What a shot!

**JD:** His head was jammed down by the accelerator. He was screamin' at me: "Cut! Stop! Stop!" (Laughs) It was a comedy, but, we played it for real. After the first three or four days on the picture, God, you start feelin' like *Batman and Robin*!

**SS:** It sounds like Robert Lowery had quite a good sense of humor.



The Caped Crusaders (Johnny Duncan and Robert Lowery) interrogate a thug in the Bat Cave.

**JD:** Oh, yeah! The most fun I ever had on a picture in my life was on *BATMAN AND ROBIN*. We came to California and worked on a picture called *CAMPUS RHYTHM* with Gale Storm. He and I met there at Monogram on *CAMPUS RHYTHM*. We did two or three college pictures together. We were both the same age and both from Kansas City, Missouri, so, we became good buddies all through the years. He dated quite a lot. In fact, he was goin' with quite a few of the well-known actresses there in Hollywood, 'cause he was really a ladies' man. A handsome man, and really a beautiful person, too. But he died on the phone talking to his mother. He had a little apartment above Hollywood Boulevard, and

he was talking to his mother and just had a heart attack and died right there.

**SS:** His poor mother! That must have been awful for her.

**JD:** It was awful for me, too, because he was just like my brother.

**SS:** What about your other costars, Jane Adams and Lyle Talbot?

**JD:** Oh, Lyle Talbot was a real dear friend of mine. We did a convention in Knoxville in 1990, and I hadn't seen Lyle since 1964. We had dinner together. He hadn't changed. He just got skinny and old, but he still had a tremendous sense of humor.

**SS:** What about Jane Adams?

**JD:** I did a lot of pictures with Jane Adams, 'cause we did a lot of the delinquent pictures. I always played the bad guy in the back of the car, makin' love to the young girl. And all of a sudden she says, "No!" I say, "Yeah!"—and then they cut away and she's in trouble.

**SS:** So you kept getting Jane Adams in trouble?

**JD:** Oh, yeah, I made a lot of those, 'cause I used to be a good-lookin' kid and they used to cast me in those bad kid pictures.

**SS:** Did you appear in any horror or mystery films?

**JD:** With the East Side Kids. We made a couple of ghost stories. I made one called *MYSTERY OF THE THIRTEENTH GUEST*. I worked a lot with Jackie Cooper.

**SS:** Producer Sam Katzman was famous for the extremely low budgets on his movies, wasn't he?

**JD:** Yes, absolutely. But Columbia did *BATMAN AND ROBIN*, so he spent more money than usual. He'd shoot the East Side Kids in five days, and sometimes we'd run into Saturday or Sunday doing looping or something like that. We never did retakes. Sam was very—uh—frugal. (Laughs)

**SS:** Did you ever appear in any other movie serials?

**JD:** No, that was the only serial I ever made. I did a few pictures with Jimmy Cagney and Humphrey Bogart and Alan Ladd. Bogie and Cagney were both very good friends of mine, and we really had a lot of good times. Through the years, I worked with these small actors, because I'm five feet, four



In the back row, you'll find John Duncan (seated) and Lee Marvin (second from right). In the front row, you'll find (in the center) Van Johnson, Humphrey Bogart, Tom Tully, and Fred MacMurray. What you won't find are any strawberries, but we know what happened to them, now, don't we?

inches. Alan Ladd was about five-five and Bogie was about five feet, five and a half inches. They all wore lifts, but they couldn't work with tall actors, even with the lifts on. So when I'd work with them, they'd wear their lifts, I wouldn't wear mine, and it'd make 'em look tall. (Laughs)

**SS:** *You were in THE CAINE MUTINY. Who did you play?*

**JD:** Well, I played the radioman in that. I saw Bogart steal the strawberries himself, eat the second bowl of strawberries.

**SS:** *Let's jump back just a little bit, okay? How did you get your start in Hollywood?*

**JD:** Well, I was raised on a farm, where I'm living now in Chillicothe, Missouri. I had a partner called Lou Fisher and we were a tap dance team. They had a talent contest in Kansas City, and this little girl and I tapped for a week

and we won the contest. Well, there was a talent scout from 20th Century Fox in the audience and he signed me to a contract to do pictures with Shirley Temple and Jane Withers. He gave my dad \$300—which was like \$10,000 now—and we all went back to the farm and packed up. We drove seven days to California and we couldn't find Hollywood, so we wound up in Long Beach. I went from Long Beach to Fox for three or four months before we ever moved into Hollywood! (Laughs)

**SS:** *How long did the Hollywood career last?*

**JD:** The last thing I did was DYNASTY and DALLAS. DALLAS was produced by Leonard Katzman, okay? And Leonard Katzman is the nephew of Sam Katzman!

**SS:** *How about that?*

**JD:** So, naturally, I was in home territory. I became the vice president

of Glen Ivy Resorts in 1983, so I had a full time job, but I would do pictures whenever my agent called me. In 1992, Glen Ivy sold the resorts, and, me being 68 at the time, I said, "Well, I might as well retire." (Laughs) So I said to my wife—this is my second family—I said, "I own a farm in Missouri. Why don't we go back and visit it?" So we went back to my old home town, because I hadn't been there in 55 years, and it hasn't changed one damned bit. I saw where I took my dancing lessons, and they still had the broken window that I used to look out when I was 12 years old! (Laughs) And all of a sudden, I said, "My God! I feel at home! Why don't we just buy a house here and I'll retire."

**SS:** *And so you did.*

**JD:** And so I did! I'm sittin' here in Chillicothe!

## BATMAN AND ROBIN

*continued from page 32*

Schumacher has worked with many stars, but he's especially happy with his present cast, Arnold Schwarzenegger in particular. "Arnold should give lessons on how to be a movie star. We have a few stars in our industry who abuse the privilege, but he doesn't. He's always on time, always knows his lines, works very hard . . . he's tireless, never complains, and he really cares about people. He's sensitive to other people's needs and what they're thinking."

The director agrees that it's a chore being tireless while dressed as Mr. Freeze. "This won't surprise his fans, but Arnold did a lot of his own stunts in the suit. The suit weighed over 50 pounds and had its own lighting source within it. It was very uncomfortable—but so were the Batsuit and Robin's suit, and Alicia had to wear all the stuff the guys wore, but with four-inch heels! Uma, who wore the least amount of clothing, was corseted and wore five-inch heels that couldn't come off because they were attached to her thighs. If the whole cast were here, they'd argue over whose costume was the most uncomfortable. It's tough to be beautiful, what can I tell ya?"

Though *BATMAN FOREVER* was a hit, not every Batfan was happy with Schumacher's approach to the mythology. "Whenever a Batman purist says to me, 'That's not pure Batman,' I say, 'Well, which Batman are we talking about?' If you go to a comic-book store, you'll see that there's a Batman in the future, a Batman in the past, a whole series in which Bane broke Batman's back . . . there's been four Robins, one of them a girl, and the villains come and go at the whim of the writers and artists. Then, of course, Frank Miller reinvented the whole franchise when he got involved. There are all forms of Batman stories. In the comics, the Joker is not the person who killed Bruce Wayne's parents. In Tim Burton's *BATMAN*, he is. In *BATMAN FOREVER*, I had Two-Face killing Dick Gray-

son's parents, and Edward Nygma worked for Wayne Enterprises. Also, in Batman legend, Dick Grayson comes to Wayne Manor as a very young child, not as a 20-year-old motorcyclist. Sometimes when I talk to a hard-core Batman purist, I'm not sure which Batman they mean, because it's up for interpretation."

*BATMAN AND ROBIN* contains an abundance of female flesh (Poison Ivy, Barbara Wilson, Julie Madison, Ms. B. Haven, Nora Fries) and it's not unreasonable to wonder whether the homoerotic overtones attributed to *BATMAN FOREVER* (See *SEX AND THE SINGLE BAT*, page 39) have anything to do with it. As Schumacher is quick to point out, though, the Batrumors go back a long, long way.

"The gay rumors started in the 1950s. From then on, it's always been picked up in the press and talked about. I guess two men just can't live in a cave in black rubber anymore without talk!

"Really, we seem to have a culture that's obsessive about homoeroticism. But everything in my Batman movies is overtly, tongue-in-cheek, over-the-top sexual, so much so that I think it's humorous. Also, I'm a fool for beauty and we put very, very beautiful people in my films. I imagine that people would find somebody of the opposite sex attractive in the movie, and I imagine that people attracted to the same sex would find somebody stimulating and attractive in the movie. I hope so. My role is to have something for everyone."

The "gay question" follows Schumacher from film to film. "I guess all film is open to this kind of interpretation. I showed *A TIME TO KILL* at AFI, and because the two rapists who are shot by Samuel Jackson fall down a staircase and land on top of each other, someone asked me if they were gay lovers. 'Why?' I asked. He said, 'Because you have them dying in an embrace.' I said, 'No, they fell on top of each other.' I read one review of *THE LOST BOYS* that said the movie was a statement against homosexuality, that

Poison Ivy (Uma Thurman, Left) is a hothouse flower compared to the chilling machinations of Mr. Freeze (Arnold Schwarzenegger, Right). Standing between them, Bane (Jeep Swenson) is the icing on the flowery ice cream cake.





**TOP:** The Dynamic Duo are an inseparable (if bickering) team in the opening scenes of *BATMAN AND ROBIN*. **MIDDLE:** Dr. Pamela Isley (also known as Poison Ivy) works her wiles on the Caped Crusaders. **BOTTOM:** Another woman, in the welcome form of that Dominoed Daredoll, Batgirl, joins the team for the ice-breaking finale.

Jason Patric, by drinking the blood of Kiefer Sutherland, was being inducted into the world of homosexuality, and he was fighting against it. By putting a stake through the vampires' hearts, he eventually put a stake through the heart of homosexuality. I also made a movie called *FALLING DOWN*, which both President Clinton and Rush Limbaugh called their

favorite movie of the year. So I'm either doing something really wrong in my career or really right!"

Those who think Batgirl is nothing more than a convenient way to kill the controversy wonder if she'll be back for another Batfilm, but Schumacher is noncommittal. "Don't you think we'd better see whether people want to see this one first? Let's not count our sequels before they're hatched."

*BATMAN AND ROBIN* opened to phenomenal business followed by a rapid falling off, and it's been argued that one of the problems is Batgirl's inclusion in the action. Schumacher, however, considered it vital to introduce the character.

"When I made *BATMAN FOREVER*, it came as a surprise how many girls were Batman fans. Because Batman has classically been male dominated, I felt we needed someone for the girls. Fortunately, in Batman folklore, there's Batgirl, and Alicia Silverstone is the most popular teen star in the world. I thought it would be exciting—and I knew a lot of young men would love it, too. Also girls who like girls; they're going to love seeing Alicia in black rubber. But I also thought it was important for young women to see a female as strong, as smart, as heroic as the guys.

"It was important for us to have Batgirl be part of the extended Batman family, not someone connected to the police commissioner, so we made her Alfred's niece. In our films, Gordon doesn't know that Bruce Wayne and Batman are one and the same person. We don't deal with that relationship."

Of course, *BATMAN AND ROBIN* isn't primarily a character study. "The special effects are part of what's fun in doing these movies. What I try to do is create a living comic book; I'm trying to give the visuals the colors, the framing, the energy of a Batman comic, which always has great action and stupendous effects. In a normal movie, the effects have to look true to life, but in a Batman movie they can be spectacular. We can push the envelope for the audience."

With *BATMAN AND ROBIN* in release, rumors are naturally rife about the next film (titled *BATMAN TRIUMPHANT*) and the villains therein. "All I can tell you is what's been printed so far. What I've read is that Howard Stern is playing the Scarecrow and Mel Gibson is playing the Mad Hatter. Although those are both excellent ideas, they're simply not true. I can tell you what I read in *Variety* a couple of weeks ago—that the villains are going to be the Scarecrow and Harley Quinn—and that I think *Variety* has very good sources."

As any fan of TV's *BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES* will tell you, the scatterbrained Harley Quinn was created as a foil not for the Scarecrow, but for none other than that Clown Prince of Crime, the Joker. It was at this point that I began to wonder if another part of my old story idea, the one in which I'd suggested that the fifth film in the series highlight the return of the Joker, might find its way onto the screen. There was yet another slight pause, and then I could all but feel Joel Schumacher's smile coming through the telephone wires:

"You never know. No, you never know. But you are kind of psychic about this, aren't you?"

Possibly. And if I'm not, I'm pretty sure his godson is . . .



# Sex and the Single Bat

by Drew Sullivan

**P**ossibly to the distress of the good folks at Warner Bros., the Boy Wonder himself put it best in the pages of *Entertainment Weekly* (June 20, 1997). Dissing the addition of Batgirl to the Dynamic Duo, Chris O'Donnell joked, "It's weird having a girl in the Batcave. My God, people are going to start thinking Batman and Robin are heterosexual!"

From O'Donnell's mouth to God's hearing aid, as far as Warners is concerned. In the wake of *BATMAN FOREVER* (1995), with its sexy shots of black rubber Batbutts and Cocky Robin's codpiece, with its prominent Batnipples, its queen-sized performance by Jim Carrey as a Riddler obsessed with hunky Bruce Wayne, with a Dick Grayson whose duds would make the young acrobat a fixture at any bar on Christopher or Castro Street, "heterosexual" was precisely the word Warners most wanted stamped on the Batsignal when *BATMAN AND ROBIN* went into production. Not for nothing was the cast studied with such distaff stars as Uma Thurman (Poison Ivy), Elle MacPherson (Julie Madison), Vivica A. Fox (Ms. B. Haven), Vendela K. Thommessen (Nora Fries), and—Holy Battits!—Alicia Silverstone (Batgirl).

Fine company, all, but for all the bosoms on display *BATMAN AND ROBIN* was still tossed a curve—those steamy rumors about Gotham City's millionaire playboy and his youthful ward just won't go 'way. Not that easily . . .

The rumors about Bruce and Dick have been around almost as long as the one claiming Captain Marvel has no balls. It was back in 1954, during the height of an attack on comic books that buried EC's *Tales From the Crypt* and helped send the Big Red Cheese to the showers, that a shrink named Frederic Wertham wrote a book called *Seduction of the Innocent* (Kennikat Press, 1972 ©1954). Wertham voiced the following opinion about a certain twosome:

"They constantly rescue each other . . . The feeling is conveyed that we men must stick together because there are so many villainous creatures who have to be exterminated . . . At home they lead an idyllic life . . . They live in sumptuous quarters, with

beautiful flowers in large vases, and have a butler, Alfred. It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together."

Still fretting over these allegations a decade later, DC Comics temporarily bumped off Alfred Pennyworth and introduced a feminine touch to Wayne Manor: Aunt Harriet, remembered today chiefly for dithering her way into the TV version of *BATMAN* in 1966 (as did the resurrected Alfred). Unfortunately, the old doll didn't manage to "beard" the heroes in their Batcave, because once again those nasty

tales resurfaced. As TV's Robin, Burt Ward, recalled in his autobiography *Boy Wonder: My Life in Tights* (Logical Fignments Books, 1995), in a chapter titled "Are Batman and Robin Gay?", "We were flooded with questions and comments from kids and adults alike . . . Older BatFans questioned me at personal appearances about what they called 'the strange and unnatural relationship between Batman and Robin.' I always answered them the same way: 'What's so strange and unnatural about two guys who run around in tights and live together?'"

Good point! What's so strange, indeed?

The gossip carried over into Ward and Adam (Batman) West's civilian lives, where it persists to this day. Wrote Ward: "A tabloid writer recently admitted to

me that he has heard new homosexual stories circulating . . . to the effect that Adam and I had a torrid love affair on and off the set." Though Ward confesses to just about everything else under the sexual sun—that he and West "dressed and undressed in front of each other hundreds of times and made love in front of each other and next to each other on many occasions"—the Boy Wonder can't quite bring himself to drop his Batbriefs on that one simple question ("Are Batman and Robin gay? Come on, you know the answer.")—no, not even in his "tell-all" bio.

So—why was this grown man skipping all over Gotham City with a scantily-clad teenage boy, anyway? According to DC Comics' official Batbio-

MELTDOWN IN GAZA?—CHARLES LANE

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DECEMBER 20, 1993—\$2.95



THE GAY AWAKENING



By PAUL BERMAN

Continued on page 40

## SEX AND THE SINGLE BAT

*Continued from page 39*

graphy: "Wayne trained Grayson to share his mission . . . Besides companionship and athletic skill, Robin provided occasional relief to the otherwise somber tone . . ."

The unidentified biographer couldn't have put it better if he'd pulled his comments directly from *Seduction of the Innocent*!

Shortly before Bats hit the Boob Tube, cartoonist Jules Feiffer published *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (Dial Press, 1965) and proved himself at least as homophobic as Doc Wertham. Ranting at length over his loathing of boy companions in general and Boy Wonders in particular, Feiffer wrote: "You can imagine how pleased I was when, years later, I heard he [Robin] was a fag."

He'd heard it from that blabbermouth Wertham, of course. After quoting the psychiatrist's famed "wish dream" diatribe ("Batman is sometimes shown in a dressing gown"), Feiffer continued: ". . . I'd be delighted to think Wertham right in his conjectures (at least in Robin's case; Batman might have been duped), but conscious dictates otherwise: Batman and Robin were no more or less queer than were their youngish readers . . ."

Some of whom, Feiffer failed to note, were precisely that . . .

When the love that dare not speak its name finally spoke up, on the pages of a DC Comics title in 1987, it was in the form of depraved sexual rage, with nary a nod to the finer emotions. Frank Miller's acclaimed miniseries, *The Dark Knight Returns*, kept Bruce and Dick on the straight and narrow, but revealed that arch fiend, the Joker, as being "thus inclined." Even then, much of the narrative was relegated to the cutting-room floor: readers learned that the Joker had brutally murdered the original Robin, but were spared the news that the Clown Princess of Crime had kidnapped and raped the bird boy before doing so.

The Boy Wonder sat out the first two batfilms, *BATMAN* (1989) and *BATMAN RETURNS* (1993), but even before he swung onto the scene in *BATMAN FOREVER*, the rumors were flying higher than the Grayson family. Publicizing a lengthy piece on the history of the gay rights movement, the December 20, 1993 issue of *The New Republic* featured on its cover a cartoon of Batman confessing his love to Robin. But it was shortly after *BATMAN FOREVER* opened, in the Summer of Batlove that was 1995, that all hell broke loose.

This time out, the clues were so palpable that even the critics noticed the chemistry bubbling. Wrote Janet Maslin in her *New York Times* review (June 16, 1995): "What with everyone's skintight super-hero clothes, Bruce Wayne's remarkable interest in becoming the guardian of handsome young Dick Grayson, and the mutual interest these two share in Bruce's motorcycles, *BATMAN FOREVER* is the most sexually ambiguous of the three Batman films."

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Batman confesses all to Robin on the cover of *The New Republic*. **RIGHT:** With apologies to DC Comics, an example of the unofficial underground shenanigans of the Caped Crusaders (well, they are still wearing capes).

"Old Debate: Super-Heroes, Sexuality" read the headline in the *Los Angeles Times* (July 5, 1995). The subheading spelled it out: "Could Batman and Robin be gay? The characters resonate with some homosexuals because the crime-fighters lead a double life and have a secret." And Frank DeCaro's opening paragraph provided the cowed capper:

"When Batman and Robin lock leather-gloved hands at the end of *BATMAN FOREVER*, and the Caped Crusader (Val Kilmer) tells his red-breasted junior version (Chris O'Donnell) that he's 'not just a friend,' he's 'a partner,' gay men in the audience are left with one riddle even Edward Nygma (Jim Carrey) can't solve: Are these guys big queens or what?"

Or to put it another way, what's it all about, Alfred? Why do these scandalous stories about Bats and Robbie continue to proliferate 57 years after a homeless Dick first set foot in Wayne Manor? Why hasn't anyone ever cast a baleful eye on Captain America and Bucky, Green Arrow and Speedy, Flash and Kid Flash, Superman and—jeeppers!—Jimmy Olsen? Why are Gotham City's first citizens, together or with "special guest stars," so popular among writers of underground erotic stories? ("Suddenly, the Man of Steel reached out with blinding speed and grabbed the Boy Wonder's small frame in both his powerful hands. Did Superman wanna work out the way he and Bruce usually did?") Horror of horrors—can that villainous

*Continued on page 82*



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# Crimson Chronicles

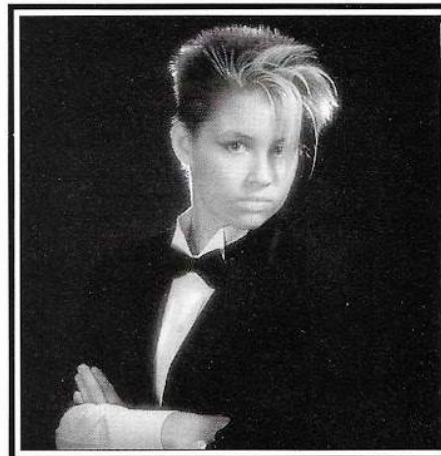
by Forrest J Ackerman



I'm a little bleary-eyed as I compose this department this time as I was up till 2 in the yawning and was on the phone this morning at 9:15 for 45 minutes, talking a mile a minute over the radio to a program in Wisconsin. Since my Ackermanthology has been published and my CDRoms have appeared, I'm being interviewed night & day. About the time this issue of *Scarlet Street* appears you'll find features on me in the big slick newsstand magazine *Detours* and the first issue of a new periodical called *Go Figure*, which characterizes me as a "cool collector." (I've never thought of myself as collecting cool; I always thought it was sci-fi, fantasy, and horror.) Last Saturday in April, I was for 2 hours at the Burbank, CA specialty shop Dark Delicacies signing both the Ackermanthology and CD-Rom, and 5 of the contributors to my anthology were there signing along with me: Ib J. Melchior, Dennis Palumbo, Charles Fritch, Jill Taggart, and the Count Dracula Society's Grande Dame, Terri Merritt-Pinckard. In the store I found "Mina," a new Dracula novel to add to the more than 250 I already have. At 5, I hopped on a plane and flew up to Roseville, CA, where, when I walked into a banquet peopled by Bob (THE HIDEOUS SUN DEMON) Clarke, Bill (THE MAN FROM PLANET X) Schallert, Roseville's (female) mayor, Princess Neolani (Francine York of LOST IN SPACE), Fred Olen Ray (director of multiple imagi-movies, including ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD and 2 others I've been in), Dolores (Ed Wood actress) Fuller, Conrad (PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE) Brooks, Miss Strawberry Festival, and numerous other celebrities, I was promptly crowned "King of Science Fiction," complete with a crown, scepter, and robe, and received a kiss from all my female subjects. The next day at the Festival (replete with a 50-foot-long strawberry shortcake), I sat between Bill

Schallert and Grace (STAR TREK) Whitney as we fantafilm folk present all signed photos of ourselves. Five different TV representatives must have interviewed me. Bob Clarke, organizer of the sci-fi affair, performed an all-day-long amazing feat of stamina, interviewing one celebrity after the other, 15 in all! The

Photo: Gary Lee Miller



Above we find the ever-present Uncle Forry Ackerman, gleefully showing off his new *Scarlet Street* T-shirt at last June's Fanex Convention, and the missing Sam.

week before that affair I was at the Flights of Fancy store in Santa Monica, CA, signing my Ackermanthology, and a few days before that I was on the campus of the University of California, and by the time you read this I'll have been down to San Diego, home of the famous annual ComicCons, signing the Ackermanthology at Mysterious Universe and doing a prestigious radio program.

I've just played a part in DINO-SAURS IN THE CINEMA, showing & telling on dinosaur models here in the Ackermansion: stop-motion prehistoric saurians from CREATION, KING KONG, and SON OF KONG, including the pteranodon that was trying to fly away with Fay Wray in 1933. It's an hour-long TV special masterminded by Les Brown, Jr. You old enough to remember his dad's "Band of Renown?"

Crimson Crush—I had one 10 years ago on the fan you see pictured: "Sam" Williams. I believe she was rather fond of me, too, but I've lost track of her and I suppose by now she's married and has two kids. Anyway, if anyone recognizes her or knows her, I'd appreciate it if they'd tell her that her honorary grandpa Forry Ackerman would be delighted to hear from her and be brought up to date on what's been happening in her young life. The address for "Sam"—or anyone else who wants to contact me—is 2495 Glendower Ave., Hollywood, Karloffornia (oops! Hollywood, CA) 90027-1110. Fax: 213-664-5612. 4email: scifibiz@aol.com.

Had a reunion with Harold Lloyd's granddaughter and she arranged for me to see in the Academy of TV's theater a preview of all 3 hours of her husband's 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. I got a kick out of the addition of Atlantis to Verne's original vision. Incidentally, I hear Disney is planning an Atlantean film.

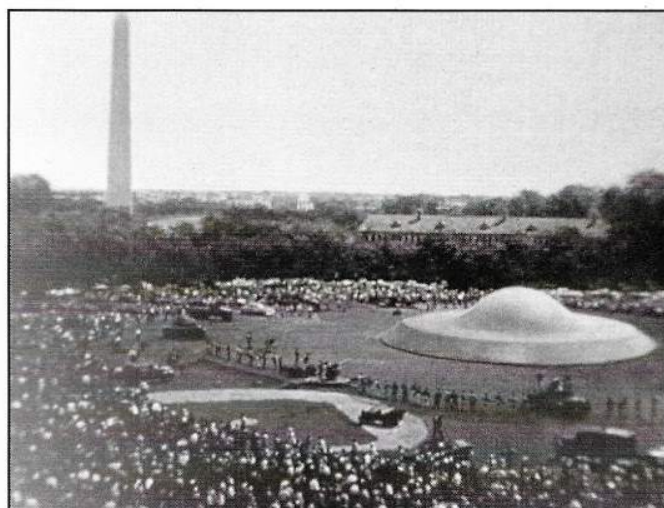
Sorry this is a little shorter than usual this time, but, like Atlantis, I'm swamped!

# THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL



FAREWELL TO THE MASTER

by Lelia Loban



As **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** (1951) begins, a flying saucer lands in Washington, D.C.

In nearly half a century since its release in September 1951, **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** has earned a reputation as one of the finest sci-fi films ever made. Although it features a flying saucer and a robot that can destroy the Earth, this is real science fiction, not a shallow space opera. The movie raises serious social and moral questions, without providing simplistic or preachy answers.

Director Robert Wise, screenwriter Edmund H. North, and director of photography Leo Tover (who won an Oscar for his cinematography) give the opening scenes the look of a breaking news story, with a blitz of 40 cuts in only five-and-a-half minutes. Military personnel spot a bogey (UFO). People all over the globe watch and listen to media reports given in many languages. The military reports that the ship moves faster than 4,000 miles per hour and appears designed for space travel. Viewers first hear the space ship during the 19th of these cuts, which continue as the flying saucer becomes visible over Washington, D. C., barely four minutes into the film.

The shot in which the saucer lands, then stops glowing and buzzing, is the first to fade out. That hardly means the fast pace lets up, however. Radio reports explain that the saucer landed at 3:47PM Eastern Standard Time and that two and a half hours have elapsed since then, but the viewer sees the saucer open and a ramp extend almost at once. No hide-the-monster games: in front of a large crowd of gawkers and reporters, out walks a well-lit, human-shaped figure in a space suit and helmet, only eight-and-a-half minutes into the movie. He barely has time to announce that he comes "in peace and good will" before a young soldier shoots. The wounded visitor removes his helmet, revealing, not a monster, but the attractive face of Klaatu, played by Michael Rennie.

Rennie (1909-1971) made more than 40 films and starred in the TV series **THE THIRD MAN**. His other films include **SECRET AGENT** (1936), **LES MISÉRABLES** (as Jean Valjean, 1952), **THE ROBE** (as Apostle Peter, 1953), **DEMETRIUS AND THE GLADIATORS** (as Peter again, 1954), **THIRD MAN ON THE MOUNTAIN** (1959), **THE LOST WORLD** (1960), **CYBORG 2087** (another role as an alien, 1966), **THE POWER** (1968), and the atrocious **ASSIGNMENT TERROR** (as yet another alien, 1970).

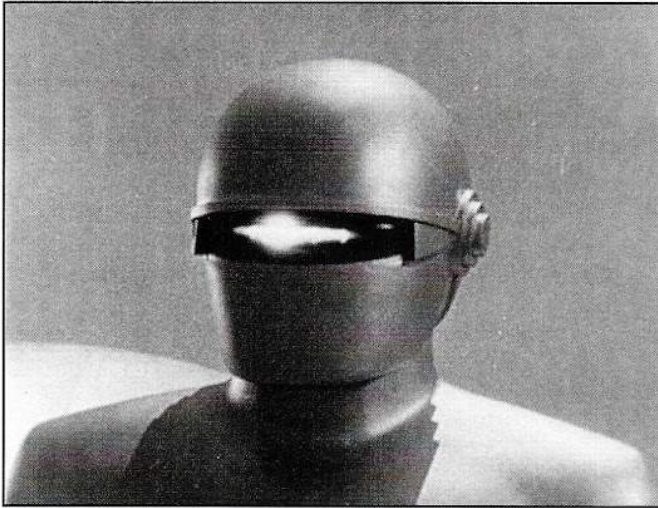
Rennie gives a fine, subtle performance in **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**. While a smart actor can play dumb, a dumb actor never could carry off the role of Klaatu. Lots of luck to Earthlings who try to figure out what's behind this spaceman's intelligent eyes and reserved demeanor, with his rare, enigmatic smiles that could mean almost anything.

When Klaatu falls, a huge metal robot, Gort (Lock Martin), stalks out of the ship. A visor lifts on Gort's featureless face to reveal a bright, pulsing light instead of eyes. From this slit, Gort shoots rays that destroy the army's weapons without harming the soldiers, who barely scramble off a tank before it melts to a puddle. Klaatu speaks to the robot, who immediately stops shooting. Klaatu appears to take charge and give the orders, though the relationship between man and machine proves more complicated later.

Later, in Walter Reed Hospital, to the amazement of his doctor, Klaatu cures his wound with an otherworldly salve he has brought with him. Klaatu says that he will only deliver his message to the whole world at once. Mr. Harley (Frank Conroy), secretary to the President of the United States, tries to set up a meeting of world leaders, but in this Cold War environment, heads of state can't agree on where to meet. Klaatu realizes that he needs to learn more about this island Earth and its inhabitants before he can communicate effectively.

The spaceman steals clothing belonging to a Major Carpenter, slips out of the hospital, and rents a room in a boarding house (using "Carpenter" as his alias). There, he befriends Helen Benson (Patricia Neal) and her son Bobby (Billy Gray). Soon, with Bobby's help, Klaatu meets Professor Barnhardt (Sam Jaffe), an Einsteinian scientist who does secret research under a federal government contract. Barnhardt sets up Klaatu's meeting, not with politicians, but with representatives of the world's scientific community.

To prove that he really comes from another world, and to convince the public to listen, Klaatu knocks out electricity all over the world for half an hour. On Barnhardt's advice, he spares hospitals, airplanes in flight, and anything that would cause loss of life if he cuts off power. The worldwide power failure that gives the film its title convinces the Pentagon that Klaatu is a menace. Hunted down by the army and



**LEFT:** Gort has an eye for trouble in Robert Wise's *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* and it's trained on the military. **RIGHT:** A ray from the robot strikes a soldier's rifle.



shot dead, then resurrected by Gort, Klaatu announces before he leaves Earth that if mankind ever threatens the peace and security of other planets by extending its violence into space, the robots his people use as a police force to prevent aggression will reduce Earth to "a burned-out cinder."

Seven feet, seven inch tall Lock Martin, former doorman of Grauman's Chinese Theater, embodies this threat of doom in the nonspeaking role of Gort. With the helmet, Gort tops eight feet. Klaatu's people have fabricated Gort and the hull of the space ship from fluid metal. In a well-rendered special effect, when the ramp withdraws into the ship, the vessel seals itself, the edges of the door disappearing and giving the ship security. This flexible metal comes directly from Harry Bates' *Farewell to the Master*, the basis for Edmund H. North's screenplay.

*Farewell to the Master* is not a short story, as often reported, but a novella of about 17,000 words, divided into seven chapters, first published in the October 1940 issue of *Astounding Stories*. Bates (Hiram Gilmore Bates III, 1900-1981) founded *Astounding Stories* in 1930 and edited the first 34 issues. As a fiction writer, he's best known for space opera.

Harry Bates deserves more respect for his contribution to *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* than he usually receives. John Brosnan voices the common opinion that Bates' writing "displays all that was wrong with magazine science fiction . . . before John W. Campbell imposed his personality on the genre." (*Future Tense*, Studio Vista, 1971.) But Campbell, who edited *Astounding* from September 1937 until his death in 1971, bought *Farewell to the Master* and admired it enough to give it a large chunk of space, in an issue that includes respectable company, such as the second installment of A. E. Van Vogt's *Slan*.

Bates died bitter about the way Street & Smith Publications, the owner of *Astounding Stories*, sold the rights to *Farewell to the Master* to producer Julian Blaustein for \$1,000, then paid Bates only \$500. That works out to about three cents per word, an unremarkable amount for first serial rights then. (Today, the same magazine, under its current title, *Analog*, still pays only five to eight cents per word for first rights.) However, three cents per word was paltry for subsid-

iary rights, and downright insulting to the founding editor of the magazine.

The plot of the novella differs significantly from that of *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*. *Farewell to the Master* features a male protagonist, reporter Cliff Sutherland, a character roughly parallel to Helen, whom North created for the film. The visitors (who travel in both space and time) never threaten Earth with destruction in Bates' version. A lunatic who mistakes the spaceman for Satan's emissary shoots Klaatu dead before the story opens. The plot focuses on the robot (Bates names him Gnut), who obtains a recording of Klaatu's voice, then works feverishly to use the voice as raw material for a simulacrum of Klaatu. The replica proves fragile and temporary because of imperfections in the recording. Cliff helps Gnut obtain the original sound equipment, which Gnut can use to correct the defects and build a better Klaatu. Cliff asks Gnut to tell his reconstituted master that the people of Earth regret what happened. Gnut replies, "You misunderstand . . . I am the master."

Less science fictional than the movie, *Farewell to the Master* is well worth reading on its own terms. Bates gives his novella the dreamlike quality of a classic weird tale, although clichés and slow-paced exposition disqualify it from the great literature class. In adapting the novella, scripter Edmund H. North changes the emphasis from the punch-line revelation about the robot to focus on Klaatu, who becomes the bearer of a message vital to Earth's future.

North (1911-1990) wrote more than two dozen produced screenplays, beginning with *ONE NIGHT OF LOVE* (1934). The others include *THE FAR HORIZONS* (1955), *SINK THE BISMARCK!* (1960), and *METEOR* (1979). The story and screenplay North coauthored with Francis Ford Coppola for *PATTON* (1970) won an Oscar.

North said in interviews that he intended to parallel the betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, and revive Klaatu permanently, but only as a private whimsy, which he did not share with either the film's producer or the director. However, the Breen Censorship Board (along with just about everybody else!) noticed and forced a change in the final script that moved the film closer to Bates' original concept. Now Gort



**LEFT and RIGHT:** Gort's ray dissolves the Army's weapons without dissolving the Army itself. **BELOW:** Klaatu (Michael Rennie) adjusts to Earth's eccentricities by perfecting his Jack Benny impression.

can't give Klaatu eternal life, for "that power is reserved to the Almighty Spirit." Still, not even Klaatu knows the limit (if any) of his restored life.

The resurrection, like other scenes inside the space ship, involves glowing, lucite controls that Klaatu and Gort operate by waving their hands through the air. The "abracadabra" gestures closely resemble those of a musician playing the eerie-sounding Theremin, an instrument prominently featured (especially in the space ship scenes) in Bernard Herrmann's electronic and orchestral music. Juilliard-educated Herrmann (1911-1975) wrote operas, ballets, and a cantata, but became best known for his film scores, beginning with *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) and including *THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* (1942), *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* (1947), *7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1958), *VERTIGO* (1958), *PSYCHO* (1960), *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* (1963), *THE BRIDE WORE BLACK* (1967), and *TAXI DRIVER* (1976). He won an Oscar for *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY* (1941).

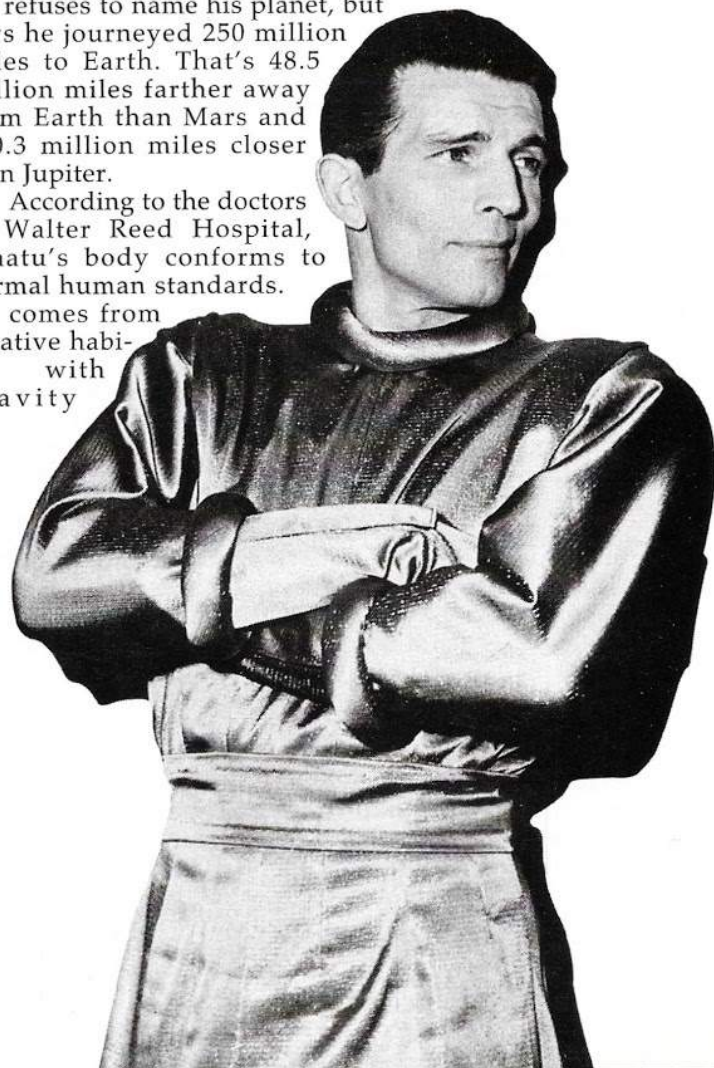
Robert Wise, who knew Herrmann from *KANE* and *AMBERSONS*, requested him as composer for *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*. Loud, melodramatic space-opera music would ruin the atmosphere of the film, Wise knew. Herrmann's exceptional, subtle score contributes to the low-key, almost documentary style that gives *DAY* its impact.

It also helps that shoddy props or costumes don't impose unreasonable limitations on Tover's camera angles or lighting. Producer Blaustein persuaded Darryl F. Zanuck, head of 20th Century Fox, to provide a larger budget than usual for a sci-fi movie of that period. The handsome, three-quarter sized model of the flying saucer cost about \$100,000, out of a total budget of \$960,000. Lock Martin wore two different Gort suits made of foam rubber sprayed with metallic paint. Since one suit zipped up the front and the other up the back, Tover could photograph the robot from all angles. (The Gort suits drew criticism for their rubbery look, but there's no intrinsic reason why a metal robot should clank around with the stiff joints of science fiction cliché. A flexible robot is far more versatile than a rigid one.) For scenes in which the robot stood still, Martin took a breather, while a nine-foot Fiberglass Gort stood still. With the budget well spent,

the film still looks good after nearly 50 years of technological advances.

Despite its convincing appearance, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* fudges some scientific details, in ways that help rather than hurt the film. For instance, viewers shouldn't waste time trying to locate Klaatu's home planet. A crowd scene includes a shot of a newspaper headline: "Man From Mars Escapes!" Perhaps this sensationalistic banner influenced some movie reviewers to call Klaatu a Martian. Impossible. He refuses to name his planet, but says he journeyed 250 million miles to Earth. That's 48.5 million miles farther away from Earth than Mars and 140.3 million miles closer than Jupiter.

According to the doctors at Walter Reed Hospital, Klaatu's body conforms to normal human standards. He comes from a native habitat with gravity





The cameras get ready to roll on the set of *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, as Michael Rennie adjusts his costume and the crew sweeps the flying saucer for cosmic dust.

and atmosphere similar to Earth's. An asteroid might orbit in such a radical ellipse that its distance from Earth averages 250 million miles. However, no planet or asteroid in our solar system meets both conditions: the specified distance from Earth and large enough mass to retain a sufficiently dense oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere to foster a civilization of carbon-based humanoid life forms the size of Klaatu. Viewers should look for Klaatu's home, not on a mundane map of the solar system, but deep within the human imagination, in a location somewhere between Curiosity and Fear of the Unknown.

But most of the action happens in the USA. *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* makes superb use of location shots that show a Washington, D. C., recognizable to a local resident. However, an error or two pops up: When Klaatu and Helen try to escape to Professor Barnhardt's house, a soldier reports their taxi heading west on 15th Street, which runs north to south! Someone with a map and nothing better to do will discover other geographical mistakes, worth mentioning only to point out their insignificance. Wise and Tover take such care with details that, most of the time, the cab actually travels the route specified in the dialogue. This movie abounds with accurate visual references to everyday life in Washington.

Extras walk in and out of People's Drugs and other identifiable buildings. Perched on a car, a news team uses a camera marked WMAL-TV. (A local AM radio station with those call letters still survives.) The camera glimpses the Smithsonian museums and "castle," as the descending spacecraft, disrupting picnics and baseball games, lands on the Mall between the Washington Monument and the Capitol. Despite landscaping changes and recent construction, the scene looks familiar today. When Klaatu gets shot, it makes sense

that officials take him to Walter Reed Hospital, an army facility more secure than other area hospitals. A journalist reports that the robot remains on watch beside the flying saucer: "Engineers from Fort Belvoir have failed to budge him." Fort Belvoir, a short commute down Route One in Virginia, would indeed provide army engineers.

The audience sees shots of famous monuments in contexts that advance the plot, when Klaatu learns what the memorials mean to humans. Bobby takes Klaatu to Arlington National Cemetery, just across the Potomac River in Virginia, because the child wants to visit the grave of his father, who died at Anzio. This scene shows Klaatu the pitiful toll of human aggression, in the vast graveyard, ranks of headstones stark on the black and white film. But this scene also shows Klaatu the best of humanity, in Bobby's enduring love and respect for his father. Wise films this strong scene with dignity, not sentimentality.

Similarly, on the Mall, Bobby and Klaatu walk up the steps and into the Lincoln Memorial. Klaatu, looking at the Gettysburg Address inscribed on the wall, says he wants to meet a man like the assassinated president, who understands human violence, but has the brains to perceive the truth and the courage to act. Klaatu asks Bobby for the name of the greatest man in the world today. Bobby first thinks of the spaceman, then suggests "the smartest," Professor Barnhardt, played by Sam Jaffe.

Perhaps this small, intelligent-looking character actor (1891-1984) drew on real life for his role. Jaffe graduated from CCNY and the Columbia Graduate School of Engineering, then taught and served as Dean of Mathematics at the Bronx Cultural Institute. His two

*Continued on page 50*

# KLAATU BARADA NIKTO

# PATRICIA NEAL

## Answers the Call

Interview by  
**Kevin G.  
Shinnick**

*Scarlet Street:* We want to talk to you about some of your fantasy and mystery films.

**Patricia Neal:** Do I have any fantasy and mystery films?

**SS:** Oh, yes! You'd be surprised. You began acting as a stage actress and went from that into movies?

**PN:** Well, I wanted to be a stage actress always, always, always. I started lessons, gave monologues, when I was just 11 years old. Then I

went to Northwestern and worked with Ann Vinerkraus, the great teacher at Northwestern Theater, at her summer theater, and then I went to New York. I got a job so quickly . . .

**SS:** Really?

**PN:** Within two months! I was understudying in *VOICE OF THE TURTLE*, and I was there for about three years, I think. Then I went to California. I did *ANOTHER PART*

It's a rare science-fiction film that gets a class act such as Patricia Neal for its leading lady, but *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* was just such a fortunate production.

Born on January 20, 1926, in Packard, Kentucky, Patricia Neal wanted to become an actress from an early age—and, at an early age, she got her wish. After some success on the stage, she came to the attention of Hollywood and found herself in such first-rate fare as *JOHN LOVES MARY* (1949, her film debut), *THE FOUNTAINHEAD* (1949, during which she fell in love with costar Gary Cooper), and *THREE SECRETS* (1950), which introduced her to director Robert Wise. When Wise began casting *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, he naturally thought of the talented Patricia Neal, and the rest is sci-fi history . . .

*OF THE FOREST*, which was Lillian Hellman's prequel to *THE LITTLE FOXES*. It's about the character of Regina Hubbard when she was a young woman.

**SS:** And that lead to film work?

**PN:** Well, I was a very big hit in the play, and everyone wanted to sign me. I signed with Warner Brothers, and my first film with them was *JOHN LOVES MARY*. Then I made *THE FOUNTAINHEAD*, then *THE*



**LEFT:** Patricia Neal is married to Raymond Massey but loves Gary Cooper in *THE FOUNTAINHEAD* (1949), based on the novel by Ayn Rand. **RIGHT:** One of the great films of the 1950s was *A FACE IN THE CROWD* (1957), in which Andy Griffith played a megalomaniacal television personality.

HASTY HEART in London, and from there it went on and on . . .

**SS:** Including a film called *THREE SECRETS*, directed by Robert Wise.

**PN:** Yes. I love him. That's the first time I did something with Robert Wise.

**SS:** Did that lead to your being cast in the sci-fi classic *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*?

**PN:** I guess it did, which was good of him. I also made *SOMETHING FOR THE BIRDS* with Victor Mature, which Robert Wise directed.

**SS:** What can you tell us about *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*?

**PN:** Listen, I found it so difficult to keep a straight face in that film! I kept laughing, I thought it was so hysterical, and the darling one—Michael Rennie, who is now in heaven, and Huey Marlowe's in heaven—Michael said, "Look, do

you intend to laugh there?" and I'd say, "Oh, no, no, no!" But honestly, I thought it was hysterical, and it was a great, great film, wasn't it?

**SS:** It's still magnificent.

**PN:** I'm always wrong! (Laughs)

**SS:** So, if you don't like what you're doing, you're in a classic?

**PN:** Yes! I thought it was funny!

**SS:** *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* had a serious theme, though, arguing against aggression at the beginning of the Cold War. It was a repressive political climate.

**PN:** Oh, that was terrible, wasn't it?

**SS:** Among so many other stars, it destroyed the career of John Garfield, with whom you worked on *THE BREAKING POINT*.

**PN:** That was terrible, but he had not been damaged at the time we made the film, had he? No, not yet. I thought it was just a revolting,

hideous, disgusting thing that happened to Hollywood in those days. McCarthy was a revolting man, he and the two men with him. People's careers were just destroyed. It was really a horrible thing he did. I don't think Communism was a big, serious threat; I really don't. People love to be radical and that sort of thing, but Communism didn't have a chance in this country, and I just think it was disgusting what McCarthy did to people's careers, their lives, their everything . . .

**SS:** Before *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, most science-fiction films were cheap, low-budget productions. Were you hesitant about taking a sci-fi film role?

**PN:** Oh, no, because it wasn't just the money; it was just going to be a good film. I mean, I was hysterical trying to keep a straight face, but I

**LEFT:** *THE NIGHT DIGGER* (1971), scripted by Patricia Neal's then-husband, Raold Dahl, was one of the star's post-stroke movies. **RIGHT:** Neal had little to do in *GHOST STORY* (1981), though she enjoyed working with Craig Wasson, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Melvyn Douglas, and Fred Astaire.



thought it was going to be good. I just didn't know it was going to be as great as it turned out to be! (Laughs)

SS: Shortly after, you did another film called *STRANGER FROM VENUS*.

PN: I forgot that. That was made in England, right?

SS: Right. At the time you made it, were you aware of the similarities between *STRANGER* and *DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*?

PN: No, no . . . I just took what I got. (Laughs)

SS: And you had a nice little vacation in England . . .

PN: Well, no, I lived in England with Roald Dahl, my husband, who was a writer. I worked as much as possible, then.

SS: Is it true that *STRANGER FROM VENUS* was originally a stage play?

PN: I don't think it was. I don't know what it was, other than that television thing. I think it was made for TV originally; I really do. I may be wrong, but I think it was.

SS: Another film you made during the '50s was *DIPLOMATIC COURIER*, with Tyrone Power.

PN: Oh, we worked for that dear director, Henry Hathaway. I loved Henry. I met him in London when I was doing *THE HASTY HEART*. He was so good to me, always. I liked making it. I played, of course, the evil woman . . .

SS: Do you find it more fun to play villains or heroines?

PN: Well, I don't care. I just hope it's a good part. (Laughs). I played mostly heroines rather than evil women. I've played just a few evil ones—about three or four, I'd guess.

SS: One of your best films, in which you're definitely a good woman, is *A FACE IN THE CROWD*.

PN: I loved doing *A FACE IN THE CROWD*! I liked Elia Kazan, because he was a fabulous director. I remember, I was at the Actors Studio, and I did a scene from *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, and I played it so fabulously that they had me come in and play it on Broadway when Barbara Bel Geddes left for a holiday. Then Elia, he put me in *A FACE IN THE CROWD*.

SS: You starred for Blake Edwards in *BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S*, opposite Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard, and Mickey Rooney.

PN: I came back from England to do it. I think it was the producer's wife, Judy Shepherd, who wanted me. I had not even met Blake Edwards, but I loved him and we got along beautifully. We filmed for three, four days in New York, and then I went to Hollywood for about two weeks. Then I came back, and I was in the A&P when I



Patricia Neal won an Oscar for her performance in *HUD* (1960).

heard a siren go by, and I looked up, thinking, "What is it?"—not knowing my son Theo had been hit by a taxi, and hit bad. He was blind twice, and he had . . . oh, it was terrible! He's a lovely boy, now. He's

married and lives in Florida. But it was a terrible experience . . .

SS: Did winning the Academy Award in 1960 for *HUD* change your status in Hollywood?

PN: Yes, it did, but then I did *IN HARM'S WAY* in Honolulu, because Otto Preminger had signed me before I won the Oscar. I did that and then I went to do my dear, great John Ford film, *SEVEN WOMEN*. I was pregnant, but no one knew it except Roald and me, and they started filming about five weeks late, so it was tricky, hoping I would get through it. I think we shot about four days when I had this terrible stroke. My darling, Anne Bancroft, took my place in the film.

SS: It was quite a struggle for you to fight back from your stroke, wasn't it? Yet you ultimately went back to work . . .

PN: Yes, but I really didn't want to work. Roald, he's the one who insisted I begin again, in *THE SUBJECT WAS ROSES*. I hated it when I started it, but then I began to be interested, and I adored it. I'm so happy he put me back to work, because I love acting, and I loved Jack Albertson. He was a beautiful man. And Martin Sheen, too; he was lovely. I was the happiest woman in the world when that turned out so well.

SS: Later, they made a TV film about your stroke, with Glenda Jackson playing Patricia Neal.

PN: Yes. I like her very much. I didn't even know her when she did it. She didn't want to know me, but I've met her two or three times since, and I really adore her. But she is, my dear, not an actress, now. She's part of the government.

SS: In 1971, you made a suspense film called *THE NIGHT DIGGER*.

PN: Roald wrote that, and he made me look crippled, which I was at that point, having had the stroke. I really liked doing it, but it was not a great success.

SS: Roald Dahl was famous for his suspense stories and children's books, including one that became the film *WILLIE WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY*. He didn't much care for the film, though, did he?

PN: Well, he wrote the screenplay for that from his book, but the di-

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## THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

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dozen films include *LOST HORIZON* (1937), *GUNGA DIN* (the title role, 1939), *THE ASPHALT JUNGLE* (1950), *BEN-HUR* (1959), *THE DUNWICH HORROR* (1970), and *ON THE LINE* (1984). He played Dr. Zorba in the *BEN CASEY* series on TV.

*THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* shows Washington as not just a place, full of monuments to dead people, but as a living city. In real life, its inhabitants get fed up with the insulting stereotype of the soulless Washington bureaucrat. Ironically, the majority of movie reviewers buy into this stereotype, while the film itself does not.

For example, Douglas Menville and R. Reginald (*Things to Come*, Times Books, 1977) call Klaatu "a quiet, sensitive, very human being, whose mental and moral superiority to the government bureaucrats and army generals is apparent from the first scenes. It's only when he mixes with the average American citizens that one gets the feeling he's satisfied with what he sees." But Helen Benson (Patricia Neal), the thoroughly sympathetic leading lady, is a federal government employee, a secretary in the Department of Commerce. Maybe she's such a low-level Munchkin that she doesn't count!

It's hard to imagine a better choice than Patricia Neal (1926 - ) for this character. She has made more than 30 films since her movie debut in *JOHN LOVES MARY* (1949); other pictures include *THE FOUNTAINHEAD* (1949), *A FACE IN THE CROWD* (1957), *BREAKFAST AT TIFANY'S* (1961), *HUD* (1963, a role that won her an Oscar), and *GHOST STORY* (1981). In 1954, she appeared in a British sort-of remake of *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* called *IMMEDIATE DISASTER* (alternate title *STRANGER FROM VENUS*). Neal, with her low, sometimes husky voice and non-nonsense demeanor, does her best work when a script lets her project quiet dignity. Helen behaves rationally and admirably, even by the demanding standards of a female viewer in today's much changed world.

Klaatu accuses Mr. Harley, secretary to the President, of cynicism, yet Harley actually comes across as a decent man. His correct prediction that world leaders will reject Klaatu's proposal for a meeting is not cynical but realistic, at the height of the Cold War. Harley delivers his news gently and always speaks to Klaatu in a civil manner.

True, Harley asks Klaatu not to leave the hospital. A serviceman locks Klaatu in—not that this stops him. The government takes a big risk by imprisoning an

ambassador, but this hostile move seems not altogether irrational. Klaatu, alone in a hospital room, seems to possess no more powers than a normal human being. Gort, clearly not harmless, seems to take orders from Klaatu. Therefore it makes some sense to try to keep the alien visitor away from Gort and the technology available inside the space ship, until Klaatu explains what he wants from Earth. Also, if Klaatu wanders around, there is the possibility that someone else might shoot him.

In a balanced portrayal of Washington bureaucracy, the government shows surprisingly little paranoia, and keeps reporters and the public informed. Government employees honestly try to do the right thing, under great pressure. When they fail, it's not because they're cynics or nut cases, but because they're fallible human beings. Despite the context of a film in which the federal government hunts down and kills an attractive alien, few characters act willfully ignorant or implausibly obtuse. Not one qualifies as a cold, uncaring, careerist, Big Government cog in the machine.

Uniquely, in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, even the military men, so often reviled in science-fiction as narrow-minded, trigger-happy knuckleheads, make their mistakes because they're frightened and because they clearly care about saving human lives. When Klaatu first emerges from his spacecraft, a young soldier, nervously licking his lips, watches Klaatu reach inside the breast of his clothing. The visitor from another world looks threatening. (With bright spring sunshine glittering on Klaatu's visor and hiding his eyes, his helmet looks like Gort's robot head. In fact, nearly every line of Klaatu's space suit resembles Gort's body.) Klaatu's hand disappears into the area of clothing in which an earthman might conceivably keep a shoulder holster. He takes out a gadget the size and general shape of a hand-

gun. Suddenly, wicked-looking prongs pop out of the sides of the gadget.

What would any normal person think? The scared soldier who shoots without waiting for an order should share the blame for his mistake with Klaatu, who already knows human beings act aggressively: that's why he came to Earth. Klaatu speaks perfect English. He gets himself shot by failing to realize that he should explain in advance what he plans to withdraw from concealment, the same way a motorist says to a traffic cop, "My car registration is in the glove compartment. Should I . . . ?"



Patricia Neal and Michael Rennie strike a romantic pose that has nothing whatsoever to do with *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*.

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# Klaatu Knows Best

## BILLY GRAY

interviewed by Steve Randisi

Several years before he became famous as Bud Anderson on TV's *FATHER KNOWS BEST*, Billy Gray portrayed Bobby Benson, the wide-eyed, All-American kid in Robert Wise's classic sci-fi thriller *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (1951). Under Wise's skillful direction, Gray turned in a credible, poignant performance as the fatherless boy who befriends a visiting alien and guides him around the nation's capital.

The plot was simple. Klaatu (Michael Rennie) comes to our troubled planet to deliver an urgent message: the people of Earth must take measure to avoid atomic war or face annihilation. Bobby, his mother (Patricia Neal), and an aging scientist (Sam Jaffe) are the only earthlings who make a favorable impression on the strange visitor from another planet. In fact, Klaatu regards Bobby as "warm, friendly, and intelligent." (Thank God—a brat might have induced Klaatu to destroy the world whether we clean up our act or not!) Several of their scenes together, especially the ones at Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial, are quite moving.

Gray's finest moment in the film comes during the night scene in which he secretly follows his alien friend back to the waiting space ship. When the boy witnesses Klaa-

tu's robot killing two soldiers, his face becomes a study in terror and amazement. The sequence is one of the eeriest, and most memorable, in the movie.

By the time young Billy Gray had landed the role of Bobby, he was already a well-seasoned professional. Born William Thomas Gray on January 13, 1938, the actor began his film career at age six, tackling everything from short subjects to top-notch films. His numerous credits include *BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND DAWN* (1950) with Edmond O'Brien, *THE GUY WHO CAME BACK* (1951) with Paul Douglas and Joan Bennett, and *ON MOONLIGHT BAY* (1951) with Warner Bros. musical star Doris Day.

Gray really became a household name when he took on the role of the teenage son of Robert Young and Jane Wyatt in the classic *FATHER KNOWS BEST*. The show was on the air from 1954 to 1960, and is still quite popular whenever it is rerun. Gray later turned up in such fare as *NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS* (1965), *DUSTY AND SWEETS McGEE* (1971), and two well-received TV reunion specials: *THE FATHER KNOWS BEST REUNION* and *FATHER KNOWS BEST: HOME FOR CHRISTMAS* (both 1977).

Today Bill (no longer Billy) Gray enjoys reflecting on his work in fea-

ture films and on the small screen. He smiles when he recalls how it all began . . .

**Scarlet Street:** *Is it true that your mother had been a movie actress?*

**Bill Gray:** Yes, she was a leading lady opposite Johnny Mack Brown, Bob Steele, Hoot Gibson, and a lot of western and Republic stars. She did some dancing, too, for Busby Berkeley. It was her agent who suggested that I go out on some interviews when I was six years old, and I started getting parts. Small parts, usually one-line things for the first few years . . .

**SS:** *Being so young, do you remember your first acting job?*

**BG:** Well, the first thing I did was a short subject called *OUR OLD CAR*. It was about how, after returning from the war, you could get more mileage out of your old car instead of buying a new one. For a while, during the war, they didn't make any new cars and this was something that dealt with that. I was only six and don't remember too much about it.

**SS:** *How did you get the part of Bobby Benson in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*?*

**BG:** It was just an interview. I'd done something just before that which sort of helped; it was a movie called *ON MOONLIGHT BAY* with Doris Day. Apparently,



**TOP:** Perky Doris Day and pesky Billy Gray gaze quizzically at an exhausted Jack C. Smith in the hit Warner Bros. musical *ON MOONLIGHT BAY* (1951). Gray's role as Wesley led directly to his being cast in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* the same year. **MIDDLE:** Klaatu and Bobby Benson (Michael Rennie and Billy Gray) discuss the space-man while paying a visit to the flying saucer. **BOTTOM:** In 1955, it was back to musicals for Billy when he appeared opposite Bob Hope as one of *THE SEVEN LITTLE FOYS*. **NEXT PAGE:** In a memorable moment from *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, Bobby Benson stares wide-eyed (insert) as Gort comes to life and "does a Moe Howard" on two sentries.



Warner Brothers made more money from that than with anything they'd made before. It was a very big grosser for them, and they later made a sequel; *BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON* was the continuation of *MOONLIGHT BAY*. Then *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* followed.

**SS:** Do you remember anything about Robert Wise, the film's director?

**BG:** Not specifically, but I do remember that we shot at night in the back lot of 20th Century Fox, the whole area which is now Century City. That's where we had the mock-up of the space ship. It was out there that we shot for what seemed like a week of nights, with barrels full of fire to keep everybody warm. That's about what I remember; it was very cold. Another thing I remember is that we didn't get to go to Washington, where the action took place. The second unit went there to shoot backgrounds, but Michael Rennie and I did our stuff in front of process screens in L.A.

**SS:** The illusion was certainly executed smoothly and effectively. It looks like Washington throughout.

**BG:** A lot of people really do think the movie was filmed in Washington; it was done that well.

**SS:** In one of the night scenes, when you follow the alien Klaatu back to his space ship, you've got some marvelous closeups.

**BG:** Right. In fact, someone recently gave me a still of that closeup, which is one of my favorite shots. It really shows the direction. I talked with Robert Wise recently. He's been getting awards for meritorious service through the years, and especially with regard to this particular movie. I kind of half-remembered that I'd gotten a piece of direction from him. At least I thought I got it from him—a scene where he wanted my eyes as big as saucers. So I asked him about this and he sort of looked perplexed and didn't remember it. Then somebody gave me an original script, and I was looking through it and found that it was one of the script directions. When the boy sees the monster banging heads together, his eyes are as big as saucers. So it wasn't his fault that he didn't remember. He didn't use that corny piece of direction; it was in the script!

**SS:** How do you think the movie holds up today?

**BG:** I think it holds up incredibly well. I've seen it recently myself. I've been working recently trying to get a sequel made. There was a sequel that was commissioned by 20th Century Fox in 1981 by Ray Bradbury. He wrote a treatment for his concepts of a sequel in which Klaatu's daughter, Klaata, comes back and looks up Bobby Benson. I've been racing



for the last 20 years and haven't been trying to get acting work, so I never really pursued this. And for some reason, 20th Century Fox didn't go ahead with it. They own the rights to the movie and I didn't think about it anymore. I asked the woman who was in charge of the project about using me for the part. This was over 15 years ago. She kind of hemmed and hawed and I got the impression they were probably thinking of using somebody else; a current big name. It didn't seem like I had a shot at it.

**SS:** *You were an actor from the original production and you don't get a shot at it?*

**BG:** Yeah! But I think now that they haven't done anything with it, and it's such a good script . . . and I am getting back into acting. I've done a bit of acting. I recently did a thing for a month in Florida called VAMPIRE WARS. I worked with Maximilian Schell, Christopher Sarandon, and Amanda Plummer . . . all big names and award winners. It was a nice group to be involved with, so I went down there and did a little cameo thing. It lasted all through the filming, but it's only like one big scene. I enjoyed it, had fun doing it, and thought . . . why not? Now's the time to do it!

**SS:** *Speaking of terrific actors, what was it like working with Michael Rennie and Patricia Neal?*

**BG:** They were fabulous people. Both of them were the quintessence

of professionalism. And I remember that Michael Rennie was especially solicitous to my mother, who is still quite lovely. He was forever getting her cups of coffee and what not, being a total gentleman. The whole thing couldn't have been more pleasant. It was a very good experience.

**SS:** *The film's special effects are still impressive by today's standards. Does anything in particular stand out in your mind?*

**BG:** I don't ever remember seeing the door of the ship slide open. I have a feeling that the set that was built didn't do that; I think they probably had a section on a stage somewhere and made it happen. The door was seamless. The big mock-up was the one they used for not being able to find the door. And when they did open it up, I think it was inserted; a mechanical effect that was done as an insert.

**SS:** *How long did it take to shoot THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL?*

**BG:** It wasn't a long schedule. It couldn't have been more than a month, maybe six weeks altogether. It went by pretty fast.

**SS:** *The film has an antiwar message.*

**BG:** Yes, it does . . . and it was aimed particularly, if you remember, at nuclear situations. But there was something in back of that. It was the nuclear thing that brought out the immediacy of it, but that's just a symptom of our inability to be civilized. This was 1951, and

there was the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and just a few years from then came Brown versus the Board of Education. The country was really not doing all that well sociologically.

**SS:** *Just like today?*

**BG:** Exactly, if not worse! (Laughs) So that's one of the reasons why I'm enthusiastic about that sequel. Ray Bradbury was smart enough to realize that the nuclear thing wasn't the crux in his treatment. He doesn't even go into that, even though this was still a viable topic in 1981. Everybody was making rockets and missiles. The other side had more than we did, but ours were bigger and could kill more people. It's just total madness!

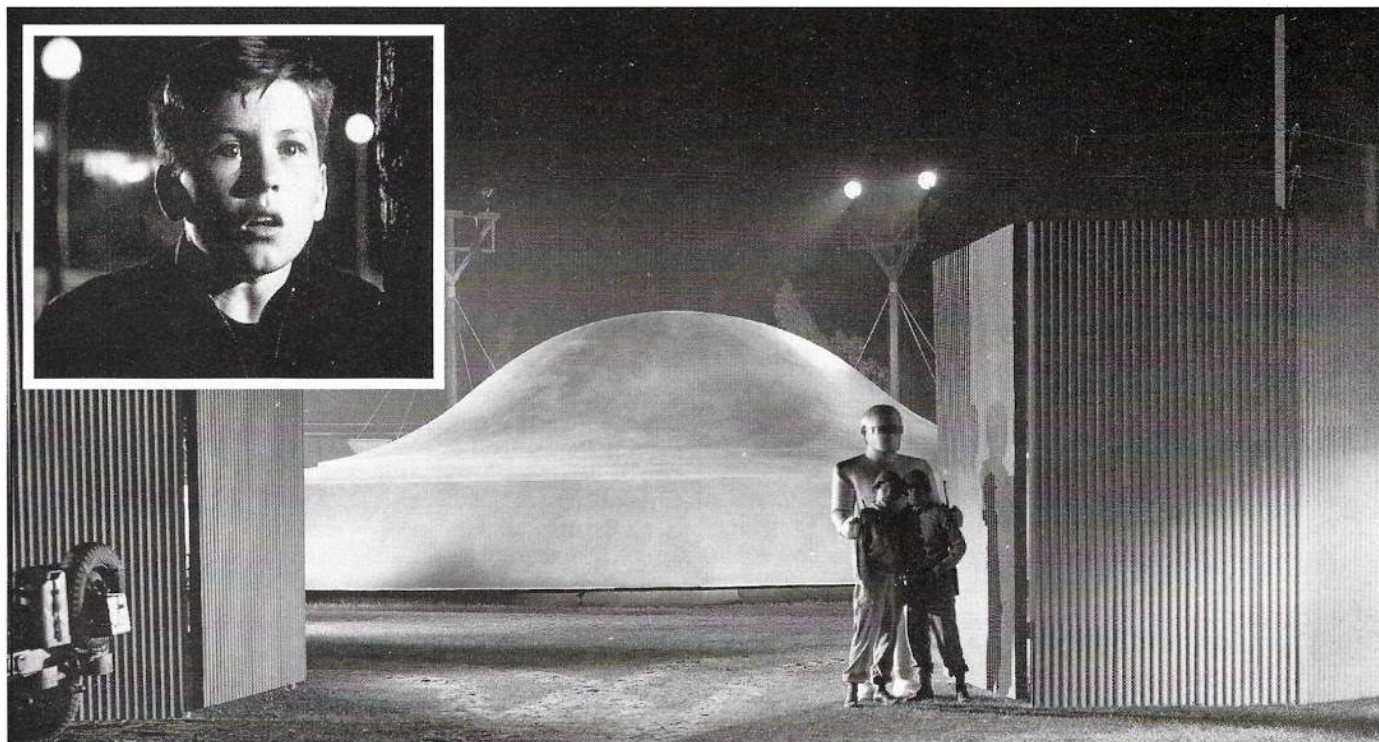
**SS:** *Do you think a sequel would now be timely, considering the popularity of UFO and alien invasion stories?*

**BG:** Yes, but with what we've got, now—mass starvation and about 30 wars going on through the world—this is an embarrassment. We've really got a lot of gall to call ourselves civilized.

**SS:** *Do you think Bobby Benson in DAY was in any way a forerunner of Bud Anderson?*

**BG:** No, I think my character in MOONLIGHT BAY was probably closer to Bud. Wesley Winfield got into a little more hijinks—you know, more mischief, which would be in the Bud vein.

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LEFT: Bobby (Billy Gray) is a lonely, fatherless child who befriends the otherworldly "Mr. Carpenter" (Michael Rennie), the new boarder at his home. RIGHT: Bobby's stepfather-to-be, Tom Stevens (Hugh Marlowe), is eager to make a name for himself by turning in the alien to the authorities, despite the misgivings of Helen Benson (Patricia Neal).



## THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

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If Klaatu *did* whip out a weapon, the young soldier would be a hero. Instead, he guns down an ambassador who only means to offer a gift for the president. The commanding officer glares: no doubt the young man can expect punishment. Significantly, his fellow soldiers maintain good discipline even under these bizarre circumstances, and do not attempt to return fire as Gort begins demolishing their weapons.

When Klaatu gets shot fatally, near the end of the film, again it happens under circumstances that would raise the average person's suspicions. Klaatu steals clothes, escapes from the hospital, and assumes a false identity. He hides out, refusing to talk to authorities. Then, his hiding place revealed, he runs. By most people's standards, Klaatu acts guilty.

Mankind can't read Klaatu's mind for his motives or intentions. It's not our fault that he refuses to explain himself until he can talk to the whole world at once. True, the average paranoid schizophrenic who demands to talk to the President of the United States and all the other world leaders doesn't show up in a flying saucer with a robot that can melt a tank, but, until Klaatu demonstrates the monstrous extent of his powers by shutting off the world's electricity, why should any reasonable person accommodate such crazy-sounding demands? And after that demonstration, what reasonable person could fail to conclude, as General Cutler concludes, that Klaatu is a menace?

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL pulls off the difficult task of making Klaatu sympathetic without turning him into a saint or the human race into devils. At worst, a few minor characters, the majority of them not government bureaucrats, think superficially (the Barley couple in the boarding house) or act crass (sensation-seeking newsmen, balanced by others who debunk wild rumors; the better reporters include real-life journalists Drew Pearson, H. V. Kaltenborn, and Elmer Davis, playing themselves) or simply misjudge the situation (General Cutler). The one obnoxious major character, Helen's boyfriend, Tom (Hugh Marlowe), works for a private firm, not for

the government—and contrary to some descriptions, he's merely vulgar, not evil.

Hugh Marlowe (Hugh Herbert Hipple, 1911-1982), may not have been the world's greatest actor, but he earned a reputation as a professional. He began as a radio announcer, then became a contract player with 20th Century Fox, where he moved from leads to character roles. On TV, he played the title role in the ELLERY QUEEN series in the 1950s, then starred on the NBC soap opera ANOTHER WORLD from 1970 until his death. He made nearly three dozen films, including IT COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED (1936), MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS (1944), NIGHT AND THE CITY (1950), ALL ABOUT EVE (1950), MONKEY BUSINESS (1952), EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS (1956), ELMER GANTRY (1960), SEVEN DAYS IN MAY (1964), CASTLE OF EVIL (1966), and THE LAST SHOT YOU HEAR (1969).

Marlowe's wooden style clues the audience that Tom is wrong for Helen. He's just not in her league. A man with potential as a stepfather shouldn't act so eager to get rid of Helen's son (well-acted as a clever kid, not a brat, by Billy Gray, then 12 years old). Because Tom wants to go out alone with Helen, he dismisses Helen's misgivings and urges her to send her preadolescent child off for the day with Klaatu, alias Mr. Carpenter, a stranger. Later, mistaking Klaatu for a romantic rival, Tom reverses himself and urges Helen to keep Bobby away from "Mr. Carpenter." Selfishness motivates Tom more than concern for the child's best interest, and it's his self interest that loses him Helen. In his insurance office, Tom gloats that if he turns in the spaceman to the Pentagon, "I could write my own ticket. I'd be the biggest man in the country."

Disgusted, Helen reminds him, "It isn't just you and Mr. Carpenter. The rest of the world is involved."

Tom exclaims, "I don't care about the rest of the world . . . You wait and see; you're going to marry a big hero." *Tres* tacky.

Helen snaps, "I'm not going to marry anybody," but Tom keeps trying to reach General Cutler even as she marches out the door.

Though Tom turns against Klaatu, the insurance agent is not the heinous villain of movie cliché. Like Judas, Tom wants a reward for turning Klaatu in, but it's not entirely fair to interpret this action as betrayal. Klaatu has never been a friend or colleague to Tom, who tells Helen with apparent sincerity that Klaatu is "a menace to the whole world. It's our duty to turn him in." Indeed, Tom acts in compliance with an urgent request to the public from the President, who declares a state of national emergency. Tom makes a bad impression only because he's so clumsy in his honesty about his self-interest.

Tom thinks he can save the world, impress his girlfriend, and turn a profit—all with one grand gesture. He's not exactly suave. However, notice that he gets most of his facts right. Klaatu's alien culture really is a threat to humankind. If Klaatu isn't bluffing, alien robots really will turn the Earth into a charcoal briquette if Earthlings don't obey alien orders. Still, Tom gets one rather important fact wrong: stopping Klaatu before he delivers his message won't make Tom a hero, because this time, resistance really is futile. But then, good sci-fi heroes never admit defeat.

Tom Stevens blurts out motives that most science fiction champions clearly share, though they're too cool (or too hypocritical) to admit such things. Does anybody in the audience of *INDEPENDENCE DAY* (1996) seriously believe that the surviving fighter pilots don't want public acclaim for their victory? What about Luke Skywalker on the stage before the cheering multitudes in the awards scene at the end of *STAR WARS* (1977)? He looks like he's loving it—in a modest and manly way, of course. True, Tom's tattletale phone call doesn't stir the viewer's blood like the exploits of a fighter jock, but what does the audience want from him? He's only human.

Interestingly, while Tom loses the "girl," his presumed rival, Klaatu, doesn't get her, either, and indeed shows no signs of even wanting her in a romantic or sexual way. During the worldwide power blackout, Klaatu and Helen get stuck in an elevator alone together, a classic setup for a movie smooching scene. It doesn't happen. Once again, North and Wise shun the trite scenario that viewers probably expect.

Instead, Klaatu realizes that Helen has figured out his identity. He tells her the truth about his mission and asks for help. The camera cuts away from this scene while Klaatu spells out the possible consequences for mankind, but the viewer can infer what he says. He has already told Professor Barnhardt that if the meeting with Earth's scientists fails to take place, the Earth will die. Now Klaatu says to Helen, "I've already told you more than I told Professor Barnhardt, because, in a sense, my life is in your hands. I thought if you knew the facts, you'd appreciate the importance of my not being apprehended before the meeting tonight . . . I can see no other hope for your planet." Although Helen never explains her motive for helping Klaatu, she looks, not love-stricken, but respectful and deeply worried—as well she should, considering the gravity of this situation. It's a mystery why some critics interpret her uneasy alliance with Klaatu as a friendship, let alone a love affair.

The refreshing absence of banal characterization in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* even extends to crowd scenes. Most flying saucer films feature mobs of

lumpen-proletariat who do little except panic, scream, stampede, and get fried by alien ray-guns. This spectacle whips up excitement in the theater audience, by contagion. In *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, though, spectators stay remarkably quiet, remarkably thoughtful, when they come to look at the flying saucer on the Mall.

The crowd does sometimes show a sensible level of fear, particularly when Gort first emerges from the ship and again at the end, when the saucer begins to glow. But Wise never turns the residents and tourists in Washington, D. C. into a faceless, brainless mob. On the contrary, nearly all the crowd scenes include closeups of concerned faces: the expressions of people thinking about what they see and hear, then drawing intelligent (though sometimes incorrect) conclusions. The crowd serves as a Greek chorus.

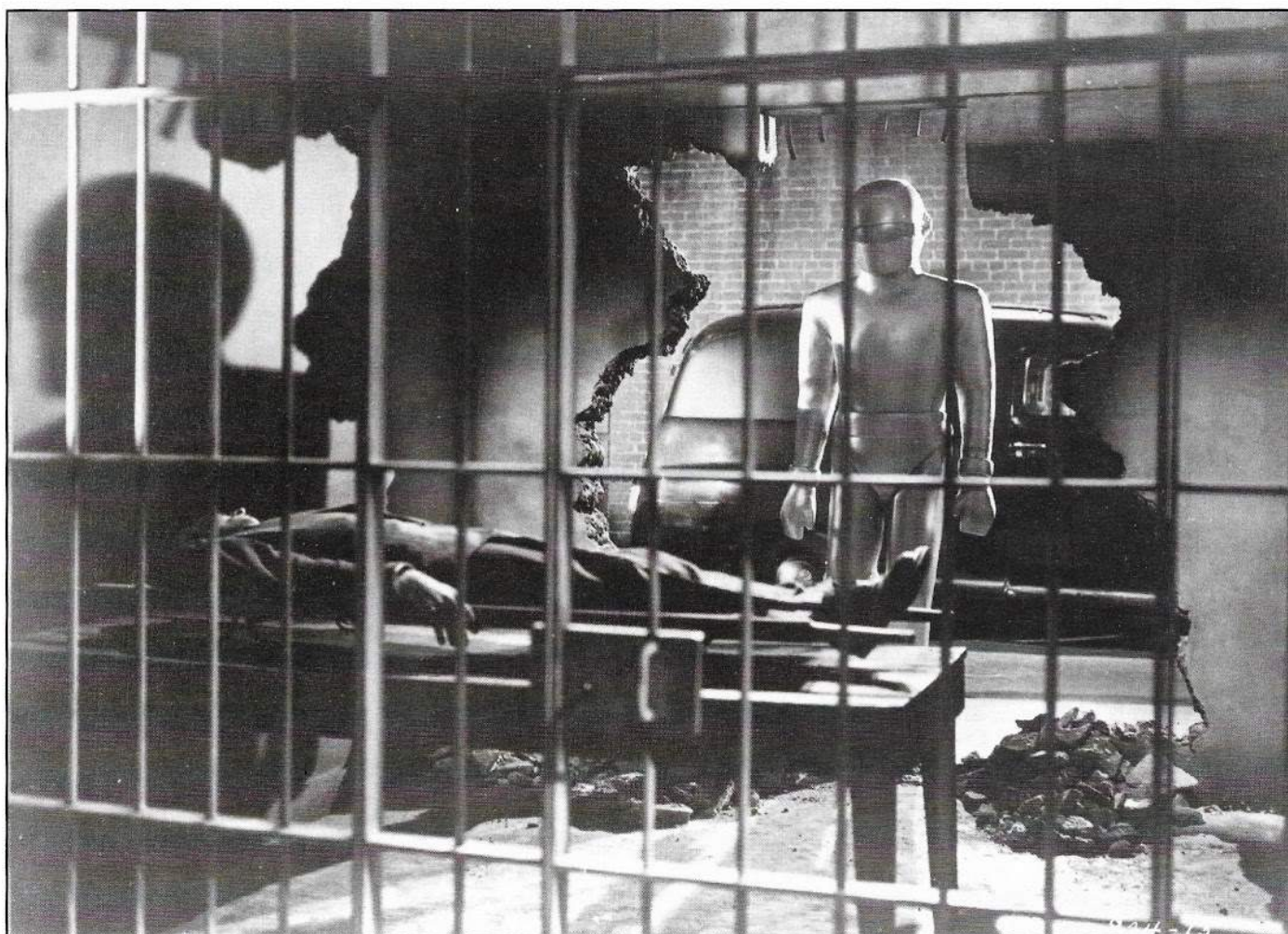
These thoughtful faces aren't just male and white, either. Crowd scenes include closeups of African Americans, and they're not the racist caricatures of passive, stupid shufflers and career criminals who pervade motion pictures of half a century ago. The black citizens in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* dress in the fashionable but restrained manner of the black middle class that thrived in post-World War II Washington.

Similarly, many women in these scenes, like the men, dress and act as if they work for a living. The movie's matter-of-fact attitude toward Helen, a widowed single mother who supports herself and her child, reflects the reality that, in 1951, a higher percentage of females in the District of Columbia worked outside the home than in any other American city, including New York.

Wise and the studio easily could have sabotaged this unusual script by casting a stereotypical scream queen as leading lady. (Imagine *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* filmed as it was depicted on the famous lobby card showing Gort carrying off a shrieking, thrashing bimbo in a skimpy dress.) Instead, Patricia Neal's own strength and intelligence lends Helen credibility. Helen watches a soldier shoot Klaatu dead, but instead of collapsing in hysterics, she avoids detection and sets out on the mission Klaatu repeats to her with his dying breath.

Sensing Klaatu's death, Gort responds to his program by vaporizing two soldiers. When Helen approaches, he opens his visor again, ready to fire his death ray. Of course she backs off, even screams—just once—but she doesn't back down. Yes, she does what so many sci-fi heroines do: she trips in her high heels and falls in front of Gort. There's a moment of commonplace melodrama here. Yet Helen wears these shoes, not because she's the usual helpless dimwit of pulp fiction (the kind of woman who wears stiletto heels on a trip to the jungle), but because she hasn't stopped for breath since leaving her office, where people dressed more formally half a century ago than they do today. For once, no intrepid hero comes to the woman's rescue. Instead, she saves herself, by using brains and common sense. As the eight-foot robot looms over her, she summons the presence of mind to utter the words Klaatu gave her to repeat to Gort: "Klaatu barada nikto."

Gort closes his visor. He picks Helen up, not brutally as on the lobby card, but gently. Realizing that he



Klaatu is killed and his body placed in a cell, but such mundane matters don't stop his robotic "master," Gort, from rescuing the alien and returning him—however temporarily—to life.

doesn't intend to harm her, she makes little effort to escape. He carries her into the space ship, where he leaves her, scared but safe, while he melts the wall of a jail cell to retrieve Klaatu's corpse. Fascinated, Helen watches Gort resuscitate Klaatu.

The resurrection scene raises more interesting problems than the one that upset the censors. In *Science Fiction Gold* (McGraw-Hill, 1979), David Saleh observes that *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* came out during a wave of flying saucer sightings, and that Klaatu arrives on his mission from the skies in a flying saucer similar to the Prophet Ezekiel's description of a glowing green "wheel in the middle of a wheel" (Ezekiel 1:16) that comes from the heavens. "Klaatu represents transcendent power and has come to offer mankind salvation from holocaust. His stature in the film and his fate suggest the figure of Christ and a science fiction version of the Ascension. Klaatu comes to Earth and goes among the people. Like Romans, soldiers first wound and then kill Klaatu. His robot, Gort, melts a wall as if rolling away a stone, and Klaatu arisen gives man one last chance, before returning to the skies."

That's all true. Yet Klaatu differs from Jesus in important respects. Jesus began preaching in childhood. He preached constantly, for years, to individuals, to groups, to anybody who would listen, and often to people who tried not to listen. Klaatu holds back his

message so long, with his finicky demand for just the right conditions to deliver it, that he nearly fails to deliver it at all! What would happen if officials took Helen into custody before she could reach Gort? This is not good planning on Klaatu's part.

And what a grubby martyrdom! Klaatu's flight in a taxi hardly makes for a dignified parallel to the ritual procession to Golgotha. His death doesn't culminate a dramatic spectacle of the crown of thorns, the public humiliation of scourging, and the slow execution between common thieves, on the Cross raised high above the multitudes. Klaatu gets bumped off in haste as he scrambles from the cab, in traffic.

Klaatu's resurrection soliloquy creates its own high drama, but of a very different kind than the Biblical scene. Like everyone else in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, Klaatu seems merely human. He comes from somewhere else, but he's no God assuming a temporary flesh and blood body; he's not a god at all. He's fallible, and if that soliloquy is any indication, he comes from a less-than-Heavenly civilization. Maybe Klaatu plays his godlike role, to the limited extent that he can carry it off, for a reason worth exploring.

Klaatu, in 1951, tells the assembled scientists of the world: "It is no concern of ours how you run your

*Continued on page 80*

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## Hail to the Master

# ROBERT WISE

interviewed by  
Kevin G. Shinnick

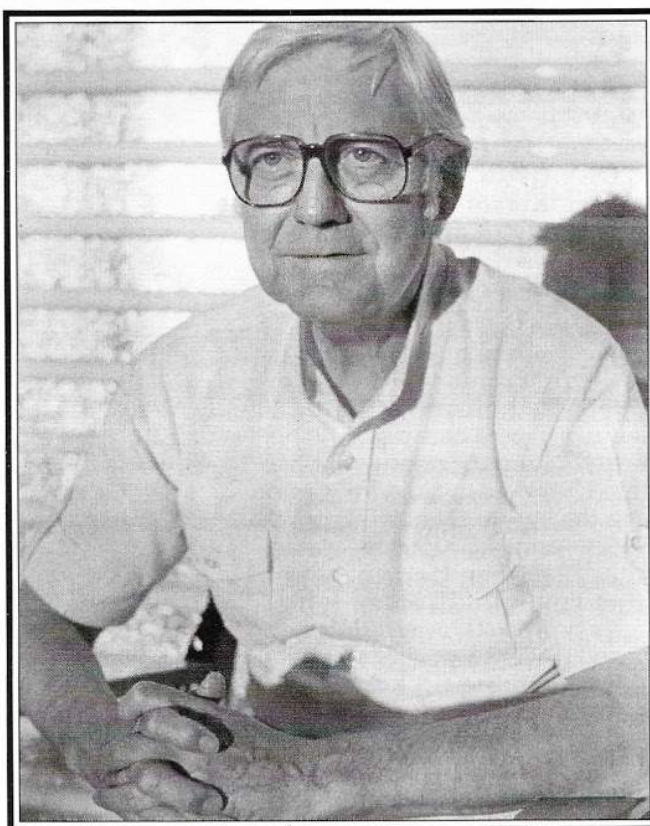
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You'll search far and wide to find another film maker as versatile as Robert Wise. The director's filmography spans everything from horror movies (1963's *THE HAUNTING*) to musicals (1965's *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*).

Wise began his career as an editor, working on such pictures as *THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* (1939), *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER* (1941), and that perennial list-topper of best films, *CITIZEN KANE* (1941).

His directorial bow came as a result of his involvement with the Val Lewton horror unit at RKO, where he helmed *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE* (1944), *MADemoiselle FIFI* (1944), and *THE BODY SNATCHER* (1945).

Scarlet Street will cover Robert Wise's career in detail in an upcoming issue, but for now we zero in on Robert Wise's first brush with sci-fi: the 1951 classic *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* . . .





**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Henry Daniell in Val Lewton's production of *THE BODY SNATCHER* (1945), Robert Wise at his desk, and the Jets doing their best to remain "Cool" in *WEST SIDE STORY* (1961). **LEFT:** "Now what were those silly words again? 'Klaatu Barada Maxim?' No, no, Maxim is coffee! 'Klaatu . . . Klaatu . . .'" **RIGHT:** Helen (Patricia Neal) confronts Klaatu (Michael Rennie), who looks remarkably fit after having been shot to death.

*Scarlet Street:* Were you involved on *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* from the beginning?

**Robert Wise:** No, I came onto it after the first draft script was developed. I had a contract with 20th Century Fox. I had just finished a picture over there and got a call from Darryl Zanuck, who was running the studio then. He said "Bob, go over and see a producer named Julian Blaustein. He's got a script I think you'll find kind of interesting as a project." And that's how it started. I went to see Blaustein and he gave me the first draft script, which had been done by Edwin North. I took it into my office, read it, and absolutely flipped out about it, thought it was wonderful! I went right back to Zanuck and said, "I want to do it."

**SS:** You weren't concerned about making a science fiction film?

**RW:** No, not at all, not at all.

**SS:** Wasn't there some professional danger in directing a film promoting peace while the Congressional witch hunts were in progress?

**RW:** I don't know. I've been asked many times about that, but there didn't seem to be any. It didn't cross my mind at all. I liked the fact that *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* was laid in our capital; I think that is one of the things that has made it more believable through the years, the fact that the setting was so familiar to most

Americans. So that's what caught me up. I thought the message, obviously, was absolutely first rate. It was very, very much needed to get out there and say stop fooling around with atomic war and nuclear war. I didn't give any consideration, really, to what was going on in Washington.

**SS:** Interestingly, in a film promoting peace, the young boy's father is a dead war hero.

**RW:** Yes. We didn't really belabor that or talk about it very much. It just seemed to be something that was right at the time and for Klaatu to make his points about the foolishness of war.

**SS:** Patricia Neal recalled that she spent most of her time on the picture laughing.

**RW:** Yes, she did, come to think of it. I don't remember her laughing unduly, but there were some light moments and it was kind of a light set. There was a little smiling and laughing in the film, but not too much. It was fairly intense.

**SS:** With religious overtones, according to the critics.

**RW:** Yes. (Laughs) It's so interesting, because it didn't occur to me. I wasn't thinking about it. Maybe North and Julian were, but I didn't really think of it. I think the casting had quite a bit to do with that. Michael Rennie was rather tall and thin, and rather aesthetic looking. And, of course, in the film he is

resurrected; he's brought back from death to life.

**SS:** There's also the fact that the name he takes is Carpenter.

**RW:** Sure! Carpenter, and there you have it! Maybe I was just dumb enough that I didn't catch it. It was only later, after I had finished the picture, that some of the reviewers made the point and I said, "Hey, I see what they're talking about. Now, if we had gone with our original casting idea, maybe that might not have developed. The original choice we'd made was Claude Rains. He was a marvelous actor, but—fortunately, as it turned out for us—he was tied up in a play in New York and wasn't available. Blaustein, Eddie North, and I were sitting around looking through the casting book, getting other ideas and names, when we got a memo from Darryl Zanuck. He said, "Fellas, I just came back from London and saw some plays there, and in one of the plays I saw a young man that I was quite taken by. He's very interesting looking and a good actor, and kind of unknown. I've signed him to a contract. I think you should look at him as a possibility for the lead in your movie." And that, of course, was Michael Rennie! So we really lucked out, because he was a far better type for us in the fact that he was new to the screen, hadn't been seen before, wasn't a familiar face . . . I think

that lent a lot of credibility to the whole thing.

**SS:** *How involved were you in the film's casting?*

**RW:** I was involved in all the casting. Pat Neal and I had done another picture . . .

**SS:** *THREE SECRETS?*

**RW:** . . . so I knew her. I thought she was excellent and would be the right type. And Sam Jaffe, whom everybody loved, was just marvelous playing the Einstein character. And little Billy Gray—I don't know if we tested Billy or if I saw a film with him, but he was one of the best kid actors I ever worked with. He was so good and quick and responsive.

**SS:** *You've done a lot of films with children and you always get such wonderful performances.*

**RW:** Well, the big thing is getting the right person. I've been asked so many times by people, "Mr. Wise, how did you get all those marvelous performances out of those actors and stars you had over all those years?" And I said, "Listen, 90 per cent of the director's job is getting the right actor in the part. That is all important.

**SS:** *Did you have a rehearsal period for DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL?*

**RW:** None. Hollywood studios are not given to rehearsal periods, and the reason for that is this: the minute you call actors in for a rehearsal, they're on salary. If you have an actor rehearse a couple of weeks before you start to shoot, and he doesn't appear until the fifth or sixth week of the schedule in his part, you have to pay him for all those weeks he's sitting around. So that's why it's very difficult to get much rehearsal time. I made a film called AUDREY ROSE and I did manage to get one week's rehearsal with the main characters, because we had the apartment set already built and I had a couple of days where somebody up there liked me—but good, solid, full weeks of rehearsal are just very unusual.

**SS:** *There's something extremely dislikeable about Hugh Marlowe in DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.*

**RW:** Yes, I know. He was such a stiff, wasn't he? Such a stuffy . . . (Laughs) He might have been un-

der contract with 20th Century Fox and they wanted me to use him, or maybe he was a little tiny bit of a name, then. I can't remember how he got the part.

**SS:** *And Hugh Marlowe was stuffy in real life, too?*

**RW:** Oh, I think so, yes. There was definitely a little bit of Hugh in that character.

**SS:** *Patricia Neal was lovely in the film, of course, but unlike so many other actresses in sci-fi films she was cast for her acting ability.*

**RW:** Yes. I knew she could do it, having worked with her once and being aware of how good she was, what her range was, and what she could project. I'm sure we talked



The ghost of Irina (Simone Simon) haunts the marriage of Alice and Oliver Reed (Jane Randolph and Kent Smith) in *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE* (1944), Robert Wise's first directorial effort.

about other people for it, but I had such respect for her and her age was right for her to be the mother of little Bobby. She just had the right look, age, quality, and ability for the part.

**SS:** *Who brought composer Bernard Herrmann onto the film?*

**RW:** I did. I knew Bernie from having worked with him on three other pictures, actually. He was the composer/conductor for CITIZEN KANE and MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS, and he won an Acad-

emy Award for *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER*. I had great respect for his ability and his range. I thought he could bring something to it. We met and he liked the idea of the film. I didn't bring him on until we finished shooting. Usually when you go to someone for a background score, they're not actually called until you've finished the picture and are ready to start thinking about the music. When I suggested him, he was brought in, we ran the picture, and he was enthused about it.

**SS:** *Herrmann had a reputation for being very difficult.*

**RW:** Well, he was. He could be hardheaded. I tell you, he was a very interesting man, because he had great interest in everything going on in the world. He was well read and right on top of topical affairs and events of the day. He was not completely wrapped up in his music.

**SS:** *He was also very innovative in his music.*

**RW:** Yes. His use of the theremin in *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* was simply marvelous. I don't think I ever had any other picture for which I felt the score added quite so much.

**SS:** *These days, almost everything is being remade. Why haven't they touched THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL?*

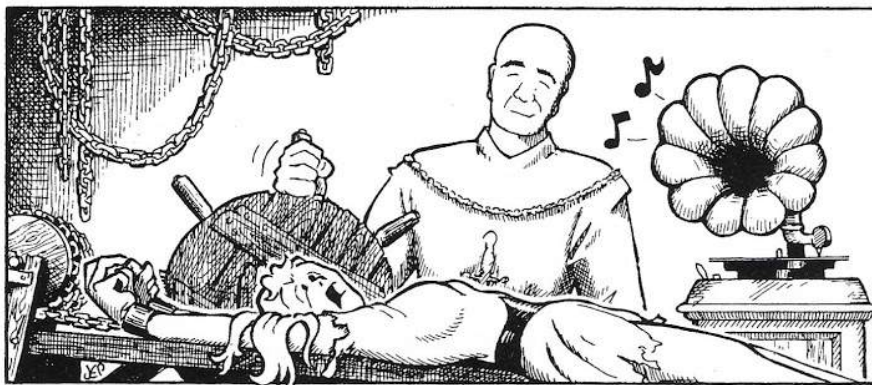
**RW:** Oh, I don't know. Quite a number of years ago, I heard an underground report that they were thinking about making it, but I don't know whether they were thinking about a remake or a sequel—*SON OF KLAATU* or something like that. They got somebody to develop an original story, but then they took a look at it and didn't like it and nothing happened.

It just never developed, which is all right with me. I'd just as soon it stand on its own.

**SS:** *It's certainly an enduring film.*

**RW:** Interestingly enough, I've done 39 films in my career—the two best known being *WEST SIDE STORY* and *SOUND OF MUSIC*—but *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* is the third best known, both here and abroad.

**To be Continued . . .**



# Record Rack

by Ross Care

## A Wistful Longing for Horror: The Fantasy World of MGM

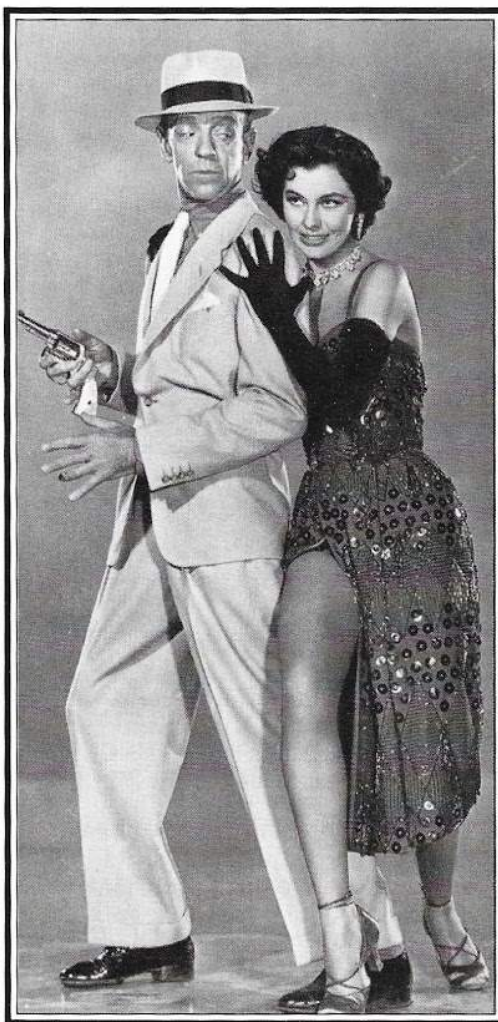
When I mentioned to a friend that I was writing something on the fantasy elements in MGM musicals, he commented, "What other elements are there?"

Indeed. But, however *fantastic* the ideology of an MGM was, it was also a *positive* fantasy: life was good, life lived to music was better, and, as in all fairy tales, true love usually conquered all. A dream world, of course, but one where the energy and tension (erotic and otherwise) expended in the working out of mythic amorous pursuits was expressed through the seductive medium of song and dance clothed in the lushest of visual/aural *mise en scene*. Another aspect which initially drew (and still draws) me to the movie musical: it's one of the few genres in which energy and tension (usually male, sexual, and often malevolently misdirected in western, war, and crime/noir films) are allowed to be expressed in positive, non-violent yet compellingly kinetic and involving ways.

And for all the light and color of Metro, there was an intriguing dark side as well, one realized more vividly at MGM than in any of the more frivolous (some might even say trivial) musicals of Fox and Warner Bros. Like early Disney, Metro seemed to intuit that, for sunlight to have any credibility, it must be thrown into relief by equally vivid shadows. As with all good fairy tales, there must be a dark side to keep things grounded (or simply interesting).

If the MGM shadows were transient, they were nonetheless there from the beginning. Like countless fledgling movie buffs, I was seduced at an early age by *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, the picture in

which the quintessence of the MGM musical splashed across the screen fully realized in 1939. Though initially not perceived as the classic it became, regular theatrical reissues (and eventual deification as a TV perennial) ensconced the film in the hearts and minds of generations,



forever establishing the triumph of Technicolor over monochrome. (A revisionary song recorded by Judy Collins speculated on an older, disillusioned Dorothy's life after Oz: "Well, it only serves her right, trading all that color for black and

white.") And if Dorothy's dust-gray home life seemed dreary at MGM, it was positively idyllic compared to the nightmarish vision of Disney's later *RETURN TO OZ* (1985). Though truer to the crude grotesquerie of the L. Frank Baum stories than MGM's version, *RE-*

*TURN* reveled in a homegrown Midwestern nightmare of electroshock therapy and sadistic hospital matrons, all unrelieved by a rather charmless Oz. As Salman Rushdie notes in his wonderful *WIZARD OF OZ* monograph: "And *this* is the home that 'there's no place like?'"

Of course, the most thrilling sequences in MGM's dream-film belong to the Wicked Witch of the West (who, as someone once pointed out, was only trying to get back what was rightfully hers!). Her slate-colored domain is as beautifully creepy as anything in a Hammer film, her ominous hourglass, with its glittering blood-red sand and Gothic carvings, right at home on the *HORROR OF DRACULA* set. In fact, MGM lavished so much vivid production value on the witch and her dominion, that sunny Oz no doubt inspired generations of youngsters with a taste for the darker aspects of the fantasy film.

## The Dark Side Persists

Indeed, it would be several years before even MGM produced another movie musical as brilliant as their 1939 triumph. But the dark shadows of Oz would persist in the otherwise sunny climate of Metro, and nowhere more notably than in the films of Vincente Minnelli. From his first masterpiece, *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS* (1944), with its celebrated Halloween sequence and death-obsessed, doll-killing Tootie, through the *ZIEGFELD FOL-*

LIES of the same year, with its Cat Women in Hell "Here's to the Girls" opening and exquisitely sordid "Limehouse Blues" sequence (partially filmed on sets left over from the studio's equally sordid 1945 version of THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY), Minnelli's films were seldom without an excursion into fantasy's darker realms.

Critics have especially noted how MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS comes alive in its richly autumnal Halloween episode. In his perceptive study, *The Films of Vincente Minnelli* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), James Naremore makes several telling points about the horrific elements in the Minnelli oeuvre. Nothing the feeling "of preadolescent Grand Guignol" that "enters the film early on," Naremore also observes that Minnelli's real interest in the Sally Benson stories (which provided the basis for the ST. LOUIS screenplay) seems to lie primarily with the Halloween sections. Without them, the film would have been "an intelligently designed musical"; with them, ST. LOUIS is "keyed to childhood imagination and the potentially dark side of life on Kensington Avenue." In his autobiography, Minnelli remembers the sequence as a child's "wistful longing for horror" and "the type of fantasy that real children, raised on the grimmest of Grimm's fairy tales, would have."

It's also interesting to note that Sally Benson's collaborative contributions to the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's classic SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1943) add a similarly bizarre effect (to, of course, a more overtly dark film), particularly in the Tootie-like character of Young Charlie's precocious younger sister. Indeed, the film seems a contemporary extension of the implications found in MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS. Hitchcock's SHADOW family could easily be the turn-of-the-century Smiths of St. Louis, migrated to middle-class 1940s California. ("Meet Me in Santa Rosa, Charlie.") It's an effect ironically heightened by the use of the nostalgic, ongoing musical motif of the "Merry Widow Waltz" to dramatize Uncle Charlie's murderous desires. British critic Robin Wood also speculates that Tootie and Agnes Smith both foreshadow the "demonic children" of '70s horror movies. Naremore concludes that (as in real life today) Minnelli's Halloween, with its poetic Gothicism and cross-dressing children, "momentarily inverts the patriarchal and heterosexual values of the film, confusing genders and setting domestic property afire," and (as with many horror movies) reveals "the dark impulse behind an innocent surface."

While the fantasy of ST. LOUIS is fairly naturalistic, ensuing Min-

nelli flights were frequently realized in ballet, a medium that liberated the imaginations of both the director and his dancing stars. For YOLANDA AND THE THIEF (1945), Minnelli and Fred Astaire came up with a fusion of Freud and Dali that is what the dream sequence in the same year's SPELLBOUND (another Hitchcock effort) might have looked like had it been staged as a ballet. For THE PIRATE (1948), a property as grounded in overlapping fantasies as THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW (1975), Minnelli and Gene Kelly created two "libido unleashed" sequences as graphic as any in cinema (and only possible, period censorship-wise, through the "innocent" genre of the movie musical): Judy Garland's "Mack the Black" number, in which her repressed sensuality is released under hypnosis in a torchlit circus tent, and Kelly's own "Pirate Ballet," in fact a further extension of Garland's erotic impulses in the form of a pyrotechnic rape/pillage fantasy. (Flaming desire, indeed!) The "Pirate Ballet" is so extreme that Minnelli even parodied it (and himself) in the "You and the Night and the Music" number in THE BANDWAGON (1953), in which (to the cue "Dance, fools! Dance!") Astaire and Cyd Charisse are engulfed in a holocaust of bombastic stage spectacle and atomic smoke bombs!

**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse dance the Spillane-inspired "Girl Hunt Ballet" in THE BANDWAGON (1953). **BELOW:** The bright and dark sides of the American family were exemplified by Vincente Minnelli's MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS (1944) and Alfred Hitchcock's SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1943), both of which shared a common screenwriter in Sally Benson.



Such balletic fantasies would escalate throughout Minnelli's career. Two key Minnelli films, *AN AMERICAN IN PARIS* (1951) and *THE BANDWAGON*, are set in the relatively realistic worlds of Paris and New York (albeit as reconstructed in Culver City, USA). Alan Jay Lerner's rather unpleasant scenario for *AMERICAN* keeps the action on a somewhat ground-level melodramatic plane, until a forsaken Kelly trips into a fantasy art world in which the paintings of French Impressionism are rendered three-dimensional and fluidly cinematic in the most substantial and literally showstopping ballet in MGM history. Earlier in the film, resident MGM neurotic Oscar Levant lets his fantasies unwind when the pianist imagines himself soloist, orchestra, and audience in a Ken Russell-

like sequence set to George Gershwin's "Concerto in F." *THE BANDWAGON* mostly stays within the insularly artificial world of Broadway theater. But while numbers such as "New Sun in the Sky" and "Louisiana Hayride" could ostensibly fit within the proscenium arch of a real stage, with the Mickey Spillane-inspired "Girl Hunt" finale, balletic urgency again propels Minnelli and his mobile camera into a world of deliberate stage artifice exploded to fluidly cinematic proportions, a grandiose noir fantasia set to music. (Kelly's non-Minnelli "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" ballet from the notorious 1948 Rodgers and Hart biofilm, *WORDS AND MUSIC*, was something of a dry run for "Girl Hunt.")

As we move into Minnelli's actual stage-to-screen adaptations of the later '50s, we encounter some decidedly curious clashes between the theatrical/cinematic and the realistic/fantastic. In his book *Directed by*

Vincente Minnelli (Harper & Row, 1989), the late Stephen Harvey

(1954) "a closet horror film." Though his speculations are based primarily on contradictions found in Lerner's original script, Harvey points out that the play's central premise, the "miracle" of the village's materializing only once every century, a supernatural function to protect it from "sin" (and a spell broken if anyone leaves), is, on close scrutiny, a latently horrific concept. Occasioned by the fervid impulse of a (probably Presbyterian) minister to save the town from witches, "horrible, destructive women," Harvey observes that this answered prayer turns Brigadoon into "a valley of the living dead, an evangelist zealot's vision of bliss," but one from which the village and all its citizens will be expelled, plunged into even more horrible oblivion should anyone manage to escape this living purgatory! Minnelli himself subtly picks up on this frightening edge in a brief shot in the opening sequence, when one of the young village girls is seen awakening from her century-long slumber with a moment of sharply depicted terror.

As a budding adolescent Broadway buff, I was somewhat put off by MGM's *BRIGADOON*, though not for the reasons cited above. I knew the RCA Broadway cast album and was miffed to find many of the original numbers excised from the film. It was not until I saw a CinemaScope revival at the late, lamented Regency Theater in New York that I really got into Minnelli's film. I had by then also experienced such lengthy, leaden behemoths as *SOUTH PACIFIC* (1958), *WEST SIDE STORY* (1961), and *CAMELOT* (1967), which, though they did include every song, measure, and fermata of the original Broadway scores, were still essentially DOA, and helped me realize in retrospect what MGM had been doing. The studio knew the difference between movies and filmed theater, a lesson apparently lost in the post-studio era. However relentlessly they red-pencilled the original scores, Metro's film versions moved and existed in real movie time.

As a child, I had also unknowingly sided with the MGM moguls who wanted to cut "Over the Rainbow" from *OZ*. Though now, like most adults, I reverse the moment, as a kid I instinctively felt the moguls were right. "Rainbow"



of New York's Museum of Modern Art labels *BRIGADOON*



**PREVIOUS PAGE:** The Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton in a makeup not used in 1939's *THE WIZARD OF OZ*) conjures up the compact disc cover of the soundtrack for *ZIEGFELD FOLLIES* (1946). **ABOVE:** Howard Keel, Dolores Gray, Ann Blyth, and Vic Damone are strangers in paradise brought together by the magic of *KISMET* (1955).

did slow down the picture for the children in the audience. Like the opening nursery act in *PETER PAN*, it was a long, somewhat tedious stretch to be gotten through before you took off for Neverland (or Oz) and the action and color really kicked in.

### The Soundtracks

But now, like the return of the repressed, every grace note struck from an MGM musical is back (and Rhino's got 'em), making these reissues some of the best around. The deluxe, two-CD *WIZARD OF OZ* set includes not one, but three (well, two and a half) versions of "Over the Rainbow" and underscoring cut from the final film. In fact, so voluminously intimidating is this most complete of OZes, that it took me about two months just to take on the challenge of actually listening to it! Once I did, it seemed that sometimes I was in the OZ I knew and sometimes I wasn't. The soundtrack of this pic-

ture is probably implanted in more memories than any other in history: we all have friends who can (and will) repeat it *in toto*—if you'll pardon the expression—at the drop of a hat, so these expanded Rhino tracks call for some personal adjustments.

But once you get used to it, the OZ set is a treasure trove, probably the most original, thorough reconstruction of a classic score ever. One and a half discs present the expanded score itself, with the second half of Disc Two given to various deleted and alternative cues, the sound throughout amazing. OZ is an early masterpiece of collective studio scoring, and this set is a fitting tribute to the arranging/composing genius of the too rarely recorded Herbert Stothart, the man who pulled it all together. Along with the beauty and wit of the Harold Arlen/Yip Harburg songs, Stothart's style remains indelibly impressed on the score, allowing both music and mood to

fluidly meld between incredible poignancy, shimmering, droll fantasy, and thrilling terror. His own theme for the Wicked Witch (and Miss Gulch), heard here in several amazing new transformations, is surely one of the great movie motifs of all time.

*BRIGADOON* has also been reissued with songs cut from the film. (Some of these tracks previously appeared on the original MGM LP.) As with all Rhinos, a major bonus is the inclusion of orchestral cues. Under conductor Johnny Green (who would soon score 1957's *RAINTREE COUNTRY*), the MGM studio orchestra (especially its woodwind section) sounds superb in this stereo remastering. *BRIGADOON*, the show, is an elaborate score with pages of dance music and filmlike underscoring. Some of this nonvocal music was adapted for the film's underscoring, notably in "Talk to the Domine" and "Till the End of Our Days," two cues incor-

eerie "Bible Scene" and the "Come to Me, Bend to Me" dance sequence. As expressively rendered by Green and the MGM orchestra, the latter is a lovely, rarely heard example of the special

lyricism of composer Frederick Loewe. Many barbs have been hurled at BRIGADOON for its hot-house soundstage look, but this never really bothered me. Aside from achieving a remarkably true impression of the high-land landscape and its shifting sunlight and cloud-shadows, BRIGADOON also looks like a Scottish fairy-tale version of beloved Oz, thus bringing more than a decade of MGM musical fantasy full circle.

#### Breathtaking CinemaScope and Stereophonic Sound

The BRIGADOON compact disc is also the first stereo release of the score. While some Rhino CDs, even from older films such as ZIEGFELD FOLLIES, have been remastered in true stereo from multitrack recordings originally used to obtain a balanced mono mix, not all of these recorded "stems" (or "angles") have survived. (A low blow is that the multitracks from THE BANDWAGON were destroyed, so the CD is all mono.) Fortunately, how-

Musicals and fantasies combined in the oddest ways at MGM. The sets for THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY (1945), a horror/fantasy that itself included the song "Goodbye, Little Yellow Bird," were reused in ZIEGFELD FOLLIES (1946), for the sequence in which Fred Astaire danced to the "Limehouse Blues." Pictured: Astaire as a phony angel in YOLANDA AND THE THIEF (1945) and Hurd Hatfield in DORIAN GRAY.

ever, the stereophonic tracks for MGM's CinemaScope musicals seem intact; thus we have fine stereo discs for SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS (1954), KISMET (1955), and GIGI (1958). But even certain tracks from SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952) are stereo, and MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS is completely in stereo (and includes the Halloween orchestral cues, and other lovely bits of underscoring).

For purely spectacular sound, KISMET is one of the best in the series. (Listen to "Fate," which at times becomes pure Miklos Rozsa, and the climactic "Sands of Time," which finds Howard Keel in especially fine voice in an Andre Previn/Arthur

Morton arrangement). Like BRIGADOON, the 'Scope film was released in stereo, but the LP never was, so here's another first. Not one of Minnelli's A-ticket films, KISMET remains a lush, wide-screen Arabian Nights, though some of the sets, notably in the Wazir's palace, have a tacky, clotted-blood look. A disinterested Minnelli seems to have filmed KISMET on automatic pilot, but it still has its moments, many of them provided by the ironically seductive, golden-gammed Dolores Gray, who knows how to sell a number. The durable Wright/Forrest/Borodin-inspired score also holds up well; in fact, it's never sounded better than in these spacious, symphonically lush stereo tracks, which again include underscoring cues of pure Holly-



wood exotica. Ann Blyth, who played the bitch daughter in *MILDRED PIERCE* (1945), and whose distinctive, polished soprano was revealed in several of MGM's late-period '50s musicals (*ROSE MARIE* and *THE STUDENT PRINCE*, both 1954) plays hero Hajj's sweet-tempered daughter, Marsinah, who is glorified in one of *KISMET*'s best-staged numbers, "Baubles, Bangles, and Beads." (Incidentally, Herbert Stothart scored MGM's 1944 version of the oft-filmed *KISMET*, which includes a few songs by Arlen/Harberg.)

A Rhino favorite of mine is its CD of *THE HARVEY GIRLS* (1946). George Sidney directed the best non-Minnelli musicals of MGM's heyday; while lacking the dark edge of Minnelli's films, they are not without their own fantastic moments (unless you consider choreographed trains realistic). Although not all the tracks are in stereo, a highlight is a complete (8.37) stereo version of the Harry Warren/Johnny Mercer classic "On the Atchison, Topeka, and the Santa Fe." Several deleted tunes are included, among them "March of the Doagies," which ended up as "The House of Singing Bamboo" in a

later Esther Williams opus, *PAGAN LOVE SONG* (1950). Another choice supplemental track is Kay Thompson's duet with Judy Garland on a demo of "In the Valley," with Roger Edens at the piano.

David Raksin gets a co-arranger credit for "Atchison" in Rhino's always exemplary liner notes, and the number is also vocal arranger Thompson's masterpiece. (Thompson's vocal charts are, as the lady herself once said, "heaven.") Indeed, this whole Rhino/Turner Classic Movies Music series (with its detailed arranger credit lists) is a heavenly and overdue tribute to Conrad Salinger, Lennie Hayton, Robert Franklyn, Edens, and Thompson, and the rest of the mostly unsung arranger/orchestrators who contributed so much to the unique sound that elevated the MGM musical to a level of quality (and vivid fantasy) only aspired to by other studios. Bravo, Rhino!

*Composer Ross Care's theater music is currently being heard in regional productions of ANGELS IN AMERICA.*



Always considered a movie made primarily for children, MGM's *THE WIZARD OF OZ* (1939) contains more moments of pure fright than any of the studio's adult musical entertainments, especially when Dorothy Gale (Judy Garland) and her companions invade the castle of the Wicked Witch of the West (Margaret Hamilton). This atmospheric production still shows the sands of time running down for Dorothy.

## Easy to Love • Mr. James Stewart

It may come as a surprise to some that the Cole Porter song "Easy to Love" was introduced by none other than Jimmy Stewart in the 1936 MGM musical *BORN TO DANCE*, but, for all his folksy charm, Stewart's range was remarkably great—not, admittedly, as a singer, but as an actor.

He could use his boyish guilelessness to mask the fact that he was a cold-blooded killer in *AFTER THE THIN MAN* (1936), let loose with the best of them in the screwball classic *YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU* (1938), hold center stage against an incredible array of scene-stealers in *MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON* (1939), tame the West in *DESTROY RIDES AGAIN* (1939), challenge suave Cary Grant for the love of Katharine Hepburn in *THE PHILADELPHIA STORY* (1940, for which he won an Oscar), and make you believe in angels in *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* (1946), arguably the most popular movie of all time.

What he did for angels he did for six-foot-tall invisible rabbits as Elwood P. Dowd in *HARVEY* (1950), one of the actor's favorite roles and one which he played on both stage and screen.

Teaming with director Alfred Hitchcock, Stewart discovered new depths in his characterizations in the suspense classics *ROPE* (1948), *REAR WINDOW* (1954),

*THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH* (1958), and *VERTIGO* (1958).

His other films include *CALL NORTHSIDE 777* (1948), *BEND OF THE RIVER* (1952), *BELL BOOK AND CANDLE* (1958), and *MR. HOBBS TAKES A VACATION* (1962).

James Stewart died on Wednesday, July 2, 1997, at the age of 89.

—Richard Valley



# FLASH GORDON

## Conquers the Laserdisc

by Bob Madison and Drew Sullivan

You are a world famous athlete. News reports indicate that the planet Earth is on a collision course with a planetoid caught in its orbit. You catch a plane home to be with your family for these final days.

The sky rains fire, and the other passengers bail out. You grab the leggy blonde who sat beside you and parachute to safety.

You think.

Waiting on the ground is a bearded maniac holding a gun. (Some days nothing goes right.) He claims to have invented a space ship. Before you know it, the three of you are rocketing to the intruding planetoid.

The strange rogue planet is named Mongo. The bearded man with the gun is Dr. Hans Zarkov, brilliant renegade scientist. The blonde at your side is the lovely Dale Arden. And you, you are . . . Flash Gordon!

So starts the saga of *Flash Gordon*, one of the great American pop culture myths. Created by the legendary Alex Raymond in 1934 and distributed by King Features Syndicate, *Flash Gordon* instantly became a public sensation. His fantastic adventures soon outclassed those of his chief rival, *Buck Rogers*, who beat Flash into four-color publication by five years. Children and adults alike thrilled to his newspaper exploits as Flash battled giant lizards in the Mongo desert, hordes of Hawkmen, Lionmen, and, worst of all, the supremely malevolent Ming the Merciless, self-styled ruler of the galaxy.

Flash Gordon soon ran into more earthly troubles: the Catholic Church believed the Hawkmen bore too close a resemblance to angels, parents thought the strip too raw and sexy for children, and self-elected

guardians of morality saw Ming as an Asian satyr. (Unlike his look-alike predecessor in villainy, Dr. Fu-Manchu, the Emperor of Mongo had a very active interest in the opposite sex.)

But, much like the comets that hurtled past his rocket ship, *Flash Gordon* was an unstoppable force. He soon appeared in his own radio show, Big-Little Books, and comic-books, and his face beamed on us from a host of toys, games, and premiums.

Flash Gordon shared the Sunday page with another Alex Raymond creation, *Jungle Jim*. While Raymond claimed to have lavished far more attention on

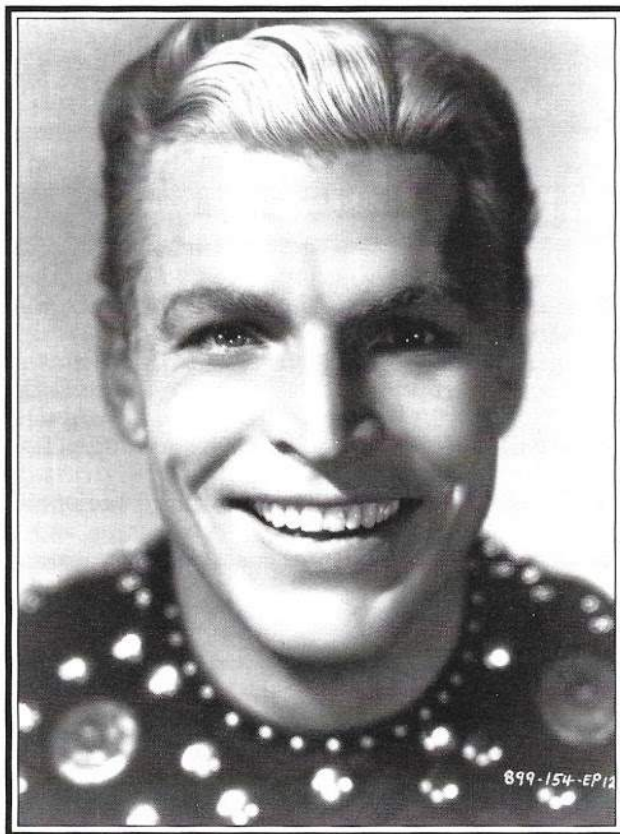
his Earthbound adventurer, comic-strip aficionados recall the early days of *Flash Gordon* with something mysteriously akin to wonder and reverence. In truth, Raymond never worked with greater daring, invention, and joy than he did during the early years of *Flash Gordon*.

But *Flash Gordon* triumphed over much, much more than comic-strip rivals and concerned parents. *Flash Gordon* conquered not only the universe, but Hollywood as well.

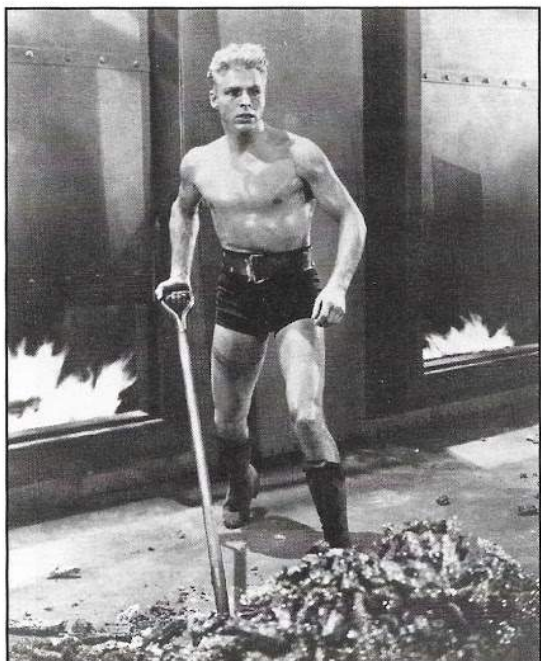
It was in 1936 that Universal Studios—which had already cornered the market on myths with *Dracula* and *Frankenstein's Monster*—decided to bring *Flash Gordon* to the screen. Utilizing standing sets from horror films and historical romances, along with the music of Franz Listz and Franz Waxman's score for *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935), the studio set out to create the most expensive, the most spectacular,

the most otherworldly serial ever produced. And with Fritz Stephani at the helm, that's exactly what they did.

There was just one problem: who would play Flash Gordon?



Buster Crabbe as Flash Gordon



**LEFT:** Casually dressed in hot pants, go-go boots, and a quart of vaseline, Buster Crabbe feeds the fires of Mongo (and our imaginations) in the original *FLASH GORDON* (1936). **RIGHT:** Finally—photographic proof that, even on the planet Mongo, crazed boogie woogie fans couldn't help but imitate the Andrews Sisters.

Universal held an open casting call. More out of curiosity than anything else—he thought science fiction was fine in the comics but was just too fantastic for the screen—Olympic swimming champion Larry “Buster” Crabbe attended the call. A gold medalist in the 1932 Olympics, Crabbe already had a few screen appearances to his credit, including the title role in *TARZAN THE FEARLESS* and a (barely) loin-clothed primitive man in *KING OF THE JUNGLE* (both 1933).

Crabbe had thought that Jon Hall, who later starred in *THE HURRICANE* (1937), was the lead contender. To the swimmer's amazement, he was offered the part by producer Henry MacRae.

A few weeks later, a bleached-blond Buster was on his way to the planet Mongo and into the hearts and memories of millions of Depression-era children—and adults, too!

*FLASH GORDON* (1936) would prove to be Universal's second biggest money-maker of the year, and the most successful motion picture serial of all time. It has become a cult favorite with nostalgia buffs, serial fans, and sci-fi fanatics. Adhering closely to the early continuity of Raymond's strip (it might even have served as a story board), *FLASH GORDON* was dazzlingly inventive for its time, and is one of the great science-fiction champs.

**LEFT:** Bottle babies Dr. Zarkov and Flash Gordon (Frank Shannon and Buster Crabbe) prepare for an underground jaunt in *FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS* (1938). **RIGHT:** Flash battles yet another bizarre menace on the planet Mongo. No, it isn't Princess Aura in a chicken suit . . .



# Flesh Dancing

**F**LASH GORDON (1936) is without doubt the most sex-minded of all motion picture serials, so it should come as no shock that FLESH GORDON (1972), its naughty twin, was originally intended to be a full-blown porn film. (Adult movies are notorious for lifting titles from legit productions, as anyone who's ever seen FERRIS BUELLER BEATS OFF will tell you.) However, The Sexual Encounters of Every Kind hit the cutting-room floor when producer/director Howard Ziehm opted instead to make FLESH GORDON an R-rated parody of the enduring Buster Crabbe chapterplay.

Naturally, that left Ziehm with a cast unable to do what it did best, but hey, you win some, you lose some . . . and anyone who has the excised footage from FLESH GORDON can contact me right here at this magazine.

FLESH GORDON starred Jason Williams as the hunk of Flesh who saves the universe, Suzanne Fields as Dale Ardor, Joseph Hudgins as Dr. Flexi Jerkoff, William Hunt (coauthor with Michael Benveniste of the screenplay) as Emperor Wang of the Planet Porno, and Lance Larsen as Prince Precious (who has an unexpected quickie with the hero in what was supposed to be a straight porn film). Somehow, John Hoyt, an actual actor, also found his way into the film, appearing briefly (and fully clothed) as Flesh's dad, Professor Gordon.

Another name player worked extensively behind the scenes on FLESH GORDON, but chose to have his name spelled backwards in the credits as Mij Htrofnad. It is Mr. Htrofnad's work that is displayed in a skillful parody of the stop-motion skeleton battle in THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD (1958).

FLESH GORDON's humor is shamelessly sophomoric, the photography in most scenes amateurish, and the acting the sort that elicits moans for all the wrong reasons, but the film actually manages to follow the outline of its Flashy predecessor quite closely—easy to do, since the original Dale was often dressed in diaphanous gowns and Flash was the kind of Joe who'd give you the shirt off his back.

In 1989, Ziehm brought forth FLESH GORDON WITH THE COSMIC CHEERLEADERS, but this production was R-rated from the start and nothing much came of it.

Nine years earlier, though, self-styled master showman Dino De Laurentiis, though not making a porn film, tried his best to screw FLASH GORDON (1980) the way he'd screwed KING KONG in 1976: with a totally inept, campy remake. Dino didn't quite succeed this time: his FLASH turned out to have a fair share of fun in it, and even aped the original by keeping the focus firmly on sex. Kind of makes you wonder about the thrilling climax, though, in which Flash (*Playgirl* centerfold Sam J. Jones) impales Ming the Merciless (Max Von Sydow) on the hard tip of his spaceship . . .

—Drew Sullivan



The original comic strip and movie serial had a healthy interest in sex, so much so that it required little exaggeration to play it for laughs in both FLESH GORDON (1972) and FLASH GORDON (1980). TOP: Dale Ardor (Suzanne Fields) in the grip of a horny thing. MIDDLE: In FLASH GORDON, Flash and Prince Barin (*Playgirl* model Sam Jones and Timothy Dalton) form a strong bond of friendship. BOTTOM: Prince Precious (Lance Larsen) forms an even stronger bond of friendship with Flesh (Jason Williams).

The 12 riveting chapters of *FLASH GORDON* contained all the evil masterminds, globe-threatening menaces and out-of-this-world monsters that fans of the comic strip had come to expect. Best of all, it may be the most blatantly sexual movie serial in the history of the medium!

Astonishingly, the threat of Earth's colliding with Mongo is dispatched midway through the first chapter. Yes, the first chapter! The remaining running time concerns Ming's desire to marry and bed the delectable Dale, his daughter Aura's sexual designs on the fabulous Flash, and the growing love between Flash and Dale. Meanwhile, beefy Prince Barin loves Aura, and hopes that she will lose interest in Flash and leave her father's kingdom for his own.

As Flash, Crabbe works up a shirtless sweat for most of the serial, wearing little more than form-fitting black shorts and matching boots. (Flash was always ahead of his time.) As Dale, Jean Rogers swoons decorously in fetchingly flimsy Mongoian dress wear and any number of gauzy nightgowns.

In the end, Flash, Zarkov, and Dale save their home planet, and Mongo, from Ming's clutches. At least, they do until the inevitable sequel . . .

The thrill-filled follow-up, *FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS* (1938), runs 15 chapters, and is only slightly less fun—possibly because of the increase in Flash's wardrobe. (What a shame that he should have graduated so soon to long pants!) Flash and the gang (this time including Happy Hapgood, played by Donald Kerr) rocket to the Angry Red Planet, this time to put the kibosh on a death ray threatening the Earth. Ming survived the fiery finale of the first serial, and is now in cahoots with the Martian Queen, Azura (Beatrice Roberts), who is resolutely evil until she dies redeemed by Flash.

*FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE* (1940) runs 12 chapters and, relying heavily on stock footage, was the most inexpensive of the three. Jean Rogers was replaced by Carol Hughes, who, like the Dale of the comic strips, was brunette. There was a new Princess Aura in town, too, with Shirley Deane stepping in for Priscilla Lawson. (Happily, Happy was gone, but Charles Middleton and Frank Shannon returned in their familiar guises as Ming the Merciless

and Dr. Zarkov.) Slower and less slick than the first two, *FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE* is still terrific fun, definitely worth a look by both movie and sci-fi buffs . . .

And the best way to look at all three chapterplays is by picking up the three laserdisc boxed sets available from Hearst Entertainment and distributed by Image Entertainment. Both *FLASH GORDON* (245 minutes) and *FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE* (234 minutes) are presented on three discs each, with the Side Five conclusions in CAV. *FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS*, the longest of the

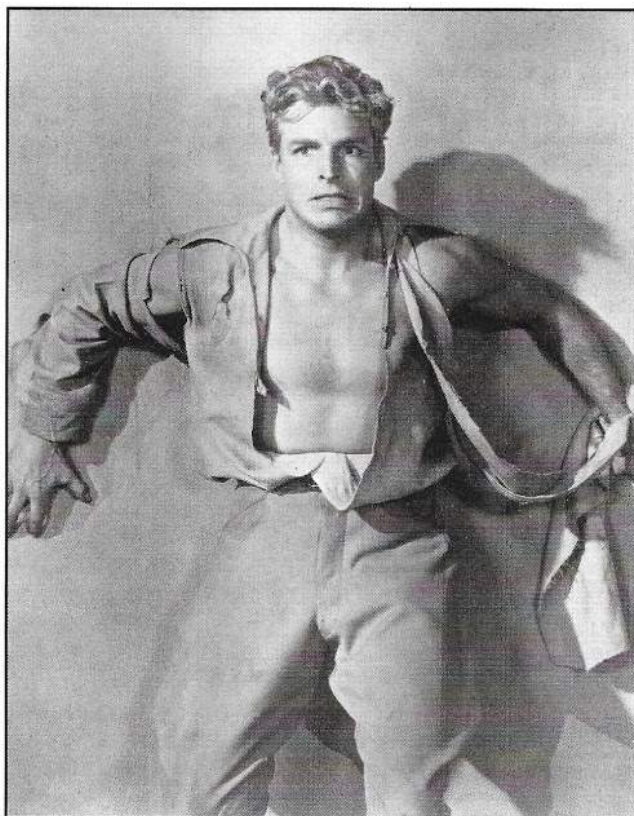
serials at 299 minutes, fills all six sides of its three discs in CLV. After years of viewing these films on slow-speed video, it's a pleasure to state that the picture quality is superb throughout, though *TRIP TO MARS* isn't quite up to the standards of its companions. The chapter stops use the original serial chapter titles, and they paint a charmingly lurid picture of nonstop action at Saturday matinees long past: "The Planet of Peril," "Flaming Torture," "The Living Dead," "The Purple Death," "The Fiery Abyss," and "The Death Mist." Throughout it all, in long pants or short, in shirts or just a heavy layer of oil, Buster Crabbe proves himself the greatest of all serial heroes.

In later years, Crabbe would tell wild and woolly stories about the early days

and his stint as Flash Gordon. During one appearance, at the 1974 Nostalgia Convention in New York City, Crabbe looked down at an audience of fans and asked: "You ever fight a hawkman? With one hand, you're punching him in the jaw. With the other, you're holding his wings on!"

Flash Gordon, today, lives on, surviving both the pseudo-pornographic shenanigans of *FLESH GORDON* (1972) and the camp of the 1980 Dino DeLaurentiis production. The *Flash Gordon* strip is distributed internationally by King Features Syndicate, and is the work of talented artist Jim Keefe. A major feature film is in the works, and Flash can also be seen Saturday mornings in his own animated program.

Flash Gordon is more than an icon of a nostalgic past. He is the avatar of our future. Wherever we go—in this solar system or beyond—Flash Gordon will be with us.



**Flash!!! Scarlet Street has FLESH for sale!!! See page 29!!!**



Shock Drive-In Presents

# THE SPACE CHILDREN

by John Brunas

As most any dyed-in-the-wool film buff will tell you, the movies we saw as youngsters, either in the secure company of our parents or with hundreds of other prepubescent thrill seekers at crowded Saturday matinees, are the ones that made the most indelible impression on us. How many times have we gone to the movies or rented a video, only to have most of what we've seen fade from memory in record time. Yet cinematic images we first glimpsed as children are as vivid in our mind's eye today as they were 25 or 30 years ago.

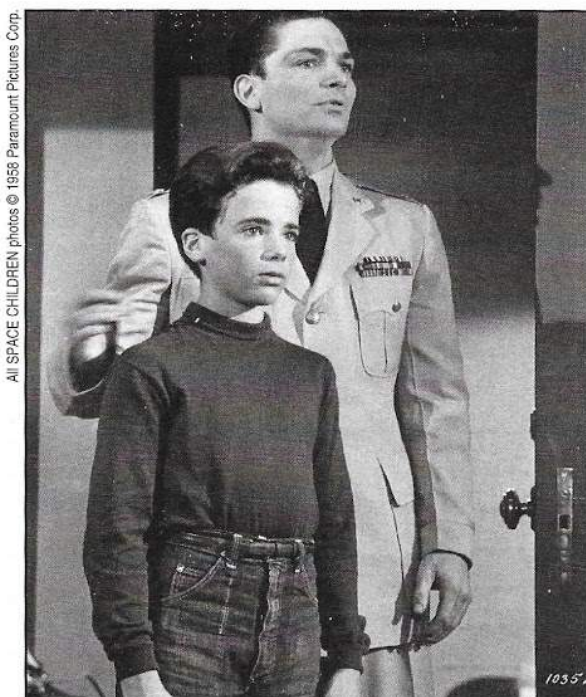
Released by Paramount Pictures in the summer of 1958, *THE SPACE CHILDREN* is a good example of the kind of childhood fantasy movie that left a lasting impression in the minds of young viewers. The action of the plot is centered primarily on the experiences of its juvenile protagonists, thus establishing a direct link with its target audience. In addition, the picture exploits the disquieting mood of the period. By 1958, the Cold War was approaching its zenith. Our nation's preoccupation with the possibility of nuclear destruction had reached a palpable level. To budding baby boomers, air raid shelters and civil defense drills were just another facet of daily life. The spectre of instant oblivion hung over our lives like an oppressive shroud. With its almost obsessive preoccupation with death-dealing rockets and push-button annihilation, *THE*

*SPACE CHILDREN* is an accurate remnant of that era of apprehension and tension.

Paramount had originally intended to release *THE SPACE CHILDREN* on an all sci-fi/horror double bill with the ingratiatingly bizarre *THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK*, but had second thoughts and separated the pair after the advertising materials had already been prepared. In most situations, *THE SPACE CHILDREN* had the dubious pleasure of supporting the juvenile hijinks of Jerry Lewis in *ROCKABYE BABY*, while *THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK* shared the spotlight with the *Colossus* of Rock, Elvis Presley, in *KING CREOLE*. Following its release, *THE SPACE CHILDREN* became one of a handful of '50s sci-fi

movies that fell into relative obscurity over the ensuing decades. For reasons known only to the distributor, the William Alland production slipped through the cracks and somehow missed being picked up for television in the New York market. While dozens of fantastic films were logging up hours of program time on local *CHILLER THEATERS* (and gaining new generations of fans), *THE SPACE CHILDREN* remained steadfastly elusive. A fine quality 16mm print was available to film students and libraries through one of the major rental outlets in the '70s, but theatrical revivals were out of the question.

With the emergence of cable television, it was inevitable that *THE SPACE CHILDREN* would eventually be picked up for broadcast—and, at long



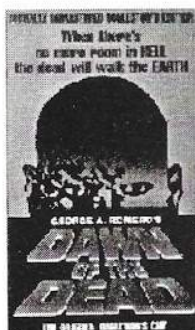
ALL SPACE CHILDREN photos © 1958 Paramount Pictures Corp.

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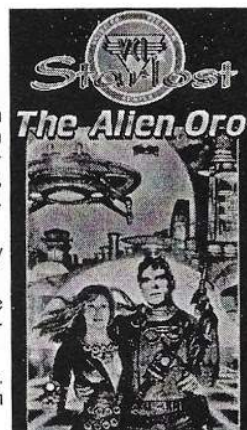
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**HERCULES AND THE AMAZON WOMEN** - Right after Iolaus' wedding, he and Hercules go to help a village besieged by monsters. Iolaus is killed (not for the last time) and Hercules is captured by Amazons. Features Michael Hurst as Iolaus, Anthony Quinn as Zeus, and Lucy Lawless (now Xena) as Lysia.

**HERCULES AND THE CIRCLE OF FIRE** - Hercules risks mortal death to recover Prometheus' stolen torch and return fire to the world of mortals. He meets and falls in love with Deianeira (the one he marries) who teaches him to talk instead of fight. Features Tawny Kitean as Deianeira, and Anthony Quinn as Zeus

**HERCULES IN THE UNDERWORLD** - Hercules leaves his wife and family to save a village from being poisoned by a hole in the Earth. Through trickery Deianeira believes she has caused Hercules' death and kills herself. Hercules makes a deal with Hades that will let him return to the world of the living with his family and save the world from the veil that is escaping from the Underworld. Features Tawny Kitean as Deianeira, Michael Hurst (Iolaus) as Charon, and Mark Ferguson as Hades (he was also Prometheus in the previous movie)

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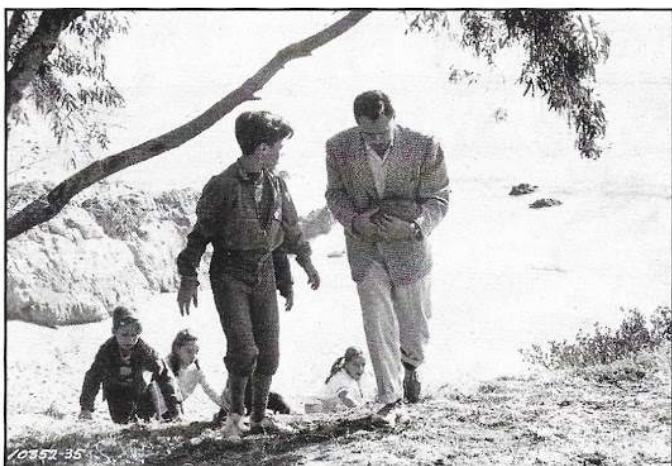
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**LEFT: THE SPACE CHILDREN** show their alien "friend" to Dave Brewster (Adam Williams), the father of Bud (Michel Ray) and Ken (Johnny Crawford). **RIGHT: Ken, Dave, and Bud** give their otherworldly visitor a nice, comfy bed in Jack Arnold's **THE SPACE CHILDREN** (1958). **NEXT PAGE: Dad and Mom Brewster** (Williams and Peggy Webber) are agog and agape at the Omelette From Outer Space!

last, it was. Both the USA Network and the popular Sci-Fi Channel aired the film on a few scant play dates in the early '90s, after which time it returned to its previous obscurity.

Lest one get the mistaken impression that **THE SPACE CHILDREN** is a seldom-seen sci-fi classic awaiting rediscovery, rest assured that it most certainly is not. Many fans are put off by the film's preachy thesis, its loquacious script, and tepid dramatic impact. Budgetary limitations dictate an emphasis on mood over spectacle, and in this respect, **THE SPACE CHILDREN** harkens back to the first William Alland/Jack Arnold collaboration, **IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE** (1953). In focusing the action on a more intimate scale, and taking full advantage of the lonely desolation of its setting, **THE SPACE CHILDREN** conveys, on its own modest terms, the awe and wonder of an extraterrestrial encounter of the third kind.

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Rocket scientist Dave Brewster (Adam Williams), his wife Anne (Peggy Webber), and their two young sons Bud and Ken (Michel Ray and Johnny Crawford), leave their San Francisco home and journey to the Eagle Point Missile Project, a military installation situated in an isolated spot on the California coast. Brewster, along with a team of other scientists and military personnel, have been commissioned by the government to insure the successful launching of the Thunderer, a powerful intercontinental missile equipped with a hydrogen bomb warhead. Once launched, the Thunderer will hook up with an orbiting satellite, providing the United States with the capability of wiping any country off the face of the Earth with the touch of a button.

As the Brewster car passes mile after mile of uninhabited beach, the boys suddenly become aware of an unearthly presence. Turning toward the rearview window, they see a mysterious glowing object slowly descend a shaft of light stretching from the heavens to the shoreline. Preoccupied with getting the car started after it has mysteriously lost power, Dave and Anne ignore the boys' seemingly senseless chatter.

Arriving at the base, Dave is ushered off to a meeting presided over by top brass Lieutenant Colonel

Manley (Richard Shannon), while Anne and the children settle into their new home in a trailer park. Bud and Ken instinctively head for the beach, and are drawn to a cave tucked away in the craggy cliffs. They are greeted by a small band of children, all of whom are related to key members of the scientific community. Seeking the origin of a strange, glowing light, the kids discover an alien life form—a pulsating, protoplasmic creature—nestled deep inside the cave. Communicating telepathically with the children, the alien gains their confidence, and forges a mutually protective alliance with its young "wards."

Back at the house, Dave and Anne are distraught over their sons' sudden strange behavior, particularly Bud, who seems possessed by a higher power. Dave can't make any sense out of their incredible story of the alien, and accompanies the boys to the cave. En route, they are joined by the other kids. Tim Gamble (John Washbrook), eldest of the "space children," is caught sneaking out of the house by Joe, his drunken, abusive stepfather (Russell Johnson). Tim wrests himself away from Joe and dashes for the sanctuary of his extraterrestrial protector. Joe catches up with the boy, and is about to beat him with a stick when the alien emits a nerve-shattering ray, temporarily paralyzing Joe and sending him scampering back to the camp.

Bud and Ken implore their father to take the alien back to the safety of their trailer. Anne becomes panic-stricken and insists that they put the creature back where they found it, but Dave, under the alien's spell, refuses. The next morning, the family discovers that their overnight guest has increased in size. The settlement awakens to the startling news that Joe Gamble was found dead by his wife and stepson, victim of an apparent heart attack.

Returning the alien to the safety of the cave, Dave reports to the base, where he learns that the launch date for the Thunderer has been moved ahead to that evening. He tries to convince Manley and Dr. Wahrman (Raymond Bailey), head of the scientific team, that the missile launching is in jeopardy, but freezes when Bud suddenly enters the office. Dave collapses before he can reveal the alien's plan and is taken to the infirmary.

As zero hour approaches, the children converge upon the launch pad. Under the alien's guidance, they pull off various acts of sabotage, right under the noses of the security guards. Bud causes a tractor-trailer containing rocket fuel to lose control and veer off the road. Two of the youngest kids play havoc with the base's communications system. "We're in the power of the children," Wahrman concludes. He accompanies Dave to the cave and attempts to reason with the omnipotent alien, but to no avail.

Back at the base, the countdown has commenced. But instead of blasting off into space, the missile self-destructs. Colonel Manley and his men descend upon the cave, only to find its entrance blocked by Bud and his friends. The alien, which has grown to monstrous proportions, emerges from the cave and returns to its planet via the same shaft of light that brought it to earth. "Why did it destroy the Thunderer," the colonel laments. "It had to," Bud replies, "because the world wasn't ready to do it." While the children of America were sabotaging the Thunderer, youngsters the world over were doing the same to their own nations' nuclear warheads. Mankind is given a second chance.

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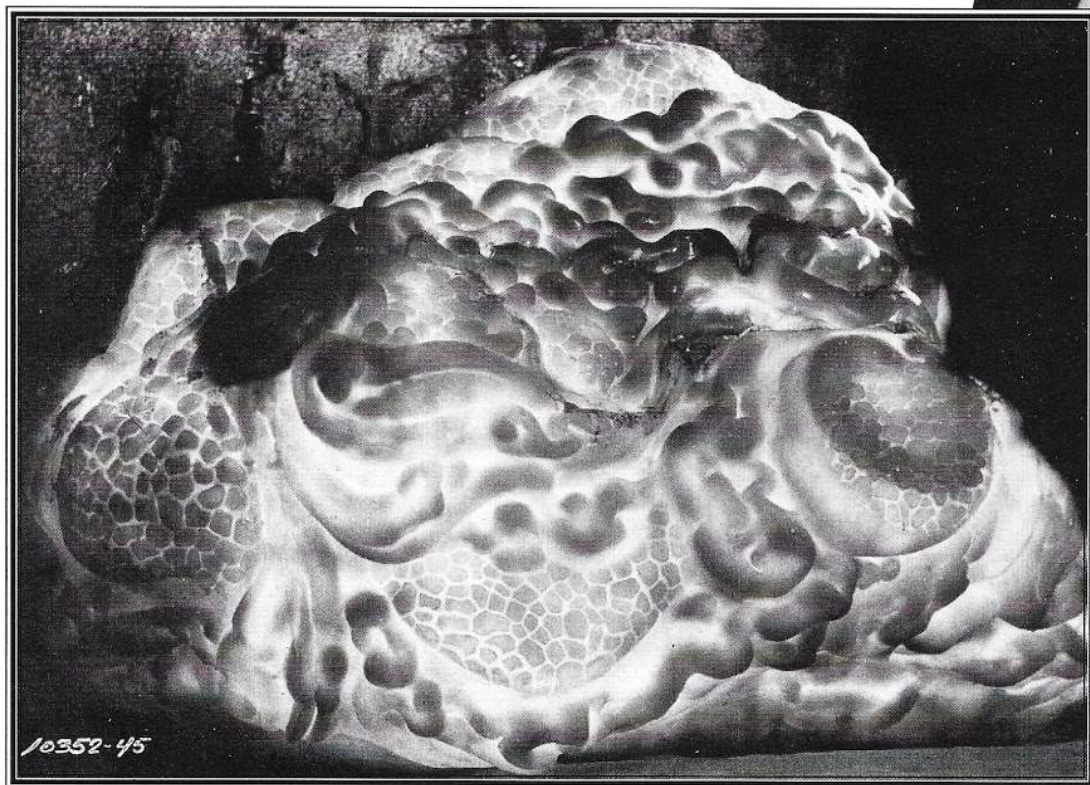
THE SPACE CHILDREN marked the final collaboration of William Alland and Jack Arnold. Alland spearheaded the production of many of Universal-International's popular science/horror thrillers of the '50s. Tight production schedules and restrictive budgets notwithstanding, Alland's productions were slickly done and workmanlike; regardless of the varying quality of their scripts, they seldom failed to entertain. His most notable pictures were directed by Jack Arnold: IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (1953), CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (1954), TARANTULA and, to a lesser extent, REVENGE OF THE CREATURE (both 1955). Although THIS ISLAND

EARTH (1955), arguably Alland's crowning achievement, was (due to contractual obligations) directed by Joseph M. Newman, the film's suspenseful climactic sequences, set upon the planet Metaluna, were helmed by Jack Arnold.

In 1957, William Alland left Universal-International after his seven-year contract ran out. Setting up his own production company at Paramount, he produced a series of modestly budgeted programmers, including THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK, which he assigned to director Eugene Lourie, and THE SPACE CHILDREN, which was earmarked for Jack Arnold, on loan-out from U-I.

THE SPACE CHILDREN was freely based on a story written by Tom Filer, entitled "The Egg." Working with screenwriter Bernard C. Schoenfeld, Alland devised a screen treatment and presented it to the studio chiefs. "I had a tremendous amount of script input on all my pictures, and many of my pictures were based on original ideas of my own," the veteran producer told Tom Weaver in a three-part interview published in *Starlog* (August 1995). "I worked very closely with writers, right from the very beginning—that was one of the things I enjoyed the most."

In Filer's original story, an alien life force comes to Earth in the form of a giant egg during an electrical storm. Kathy, a crippled child, discovers the egg and becomes fiercely protective of it. The authorities, misunderstanding its intentions, seek to destroy the egg, which has grown to gigantic proportions. But before they can harm it, the egg absorbs Kathy





Michel Ray's brief but remarkably varied acting career included roles as a Mexican boy trying to save the life of his pet bull in *THE BRAVE ONE* (1956), a manipulative disabled child in *FLOOD TIDE* (1958), and one of the Arab-boy lovers of *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA* (1962).

and mysteriously disappears. Now cured of her paralysis, Kathy is living proof that the alien's intentions were peaceful.

Tom Filer was no stranger to the fantasy genre. He wrote the screenplay for *THE BEAST WITH A MILLION EYES*, released in early 1956 by the newly-formed American Releasing Corporation, soon to be rechristened American International Pictures. In this crudely made, painfully amateurish effort, coproduced by Roger Corman (his second attempt to cash in on the exploitation/sci-fi/horror market), an omnipotent being from another world lands in the southeastern desert and proceeds to subjugate the wills of susceptible humans (as well as various forms of wildlife) in the vicinity. As in the case of "The Egg" and the final script for *THE SPACE CHILDREN*, the finale of *THE BEAST WITH A MILLION EYES* has quasi-religious/moralistic undertones. In all three cases, the virtues of love, faith, and trust are instrumental in bringing about the cessation of a destructive power, be it alien or terrestrial.

In their screen treatment for *THE SPACE CHILDREN*, Alland and Schoenfeld retained several key elements from Filer's imaginative story. In both versions, the alien relies on children to protect it from harm, until it can get its benevolent message across to the pointy-headed adults. The giant egg of the story's title has been supplanted by a giant "brain" in the film, which, for no discernible reason, grows to enormous proportions. As in the case of "The Egg," wherein the life force cured the little girl of her disability, the alien in *THE SPACE CHILDREN* performs an even greater miracle—emasculating the oh-so-phallic Thunderer, that symbol of war, destruction, and man's unbridled testosterone. Whereas Filer's story vaguely suggested that the unearthly visitor may have been celestial in nature, *THE SPACE CHILDREN* concludes on a similarly ambiguous note: in the wake of the alien's departure, the entire cast gazes reverentially toward the heavens as a quote from St. Matthew ("Verily, I say unto you . . . except ye, become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven") fills the screen.

Ever since Klaatu landed his spacecraft on the front lawn of the White House in the 1951 classic *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, aliens of every stripe have come to earth to save mankind from our own worst instincts. Helmut Dantine played a sensitive Venusian who, like Michael Rennie's Klaatu, ultimately sacrifices his life in an attempt to alter man's fate in the 1955 British film *STRANGER FROM VENUS*. In another British production, *THE STRANGE WORLD OF PLANET X* (aka *THE COSMIC MONSTER*, 1958), an urbane alien visitor (Martin Benson) attempts to halt the work of a rogue scientist whose atomic experiments pose grave consequences for the entire universe. Invaders with a smug superiority complex failed to get their message of salvation across in Ed Wood's notorious *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1958). *WARNING FROM SPACE* (1956), *THE COSMIC MAN* (1959), as well as an episode of TV's *THE OUTER LIMITS* ("The Inheritors"), also explored this popular theme.



A number of television veterans are featured in *THE SPACE CHILDREN*, including Raymond Bailey (*THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES*, third from left), Jackie Coogan (*THE ADDAMS FAMILY*, not pictured), Russell Johnson (*GILLIGAN'S ISLAND*, not pictured), Johnny Crawford (*THE RIFLEMAN*, sixth from left), and Johnny Washbrook (*MY FRIEND FLICKA*, second from right).

As in such previous Alland/Arnold genre movies as *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*, *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON*, and *TARANTULA*, the stark, uncompromising landscape plays as important a part in the film's proceedings as any of the characters. The omnipresent sound of pounding surf, the craggy cliffs, and the panoramic expanses of sea and sky, reinforce the film's queasy aura of grim inevitability. "I feel as if I were in another world" Anne Brewster says forlornly, observing the barren seascape. Ernest Laszlo's mood-provoking, low-key camerawork and Van Cleave's outerworldly score emphasizes the unsettling atmosphere. (The composer is best known for work on TV's *TWILIGHT ZONE*, for which he used interesting string effects to establish mood.)

Seeing the film again recently after many years, William Alland came away with a rather positive assessment of *THE SPACE CHILDREN*. "The film suffers from only one thing: being made for five cents," he told Tom Weaver. "I saw it again recently and I liked this little movie . . . For its time, it was a pioneer film. This was the first movie that I'm aware of that brought children into the science-fiction field on the basis of trying to save the world. *E.T.* and the children in that (film) are a direct descendant of *THE SPACE CHILDREN*."

In Alland's opinion, the film's meager budget adversely affected the potency of the alien's mission. "It would have been better to show that all the atomic bombs all over the world had been defused," he commented. "We should have shown shots of children in Scandinavia and Russia, and everywhere, all doing the same things as the American children. That would have given the thing the kind of big scope it needed, but we didn't have the money for that."

Alland also has reservations about the effectiveness of the alien itself, and rightly so. "'The giant 'egg' in the cave didn't develop any kind of menace, as it should have,'" he remarked. According to the film's pressbook, the alien cost thousands of dollars to construct. Created by Ivyl Burks, head of Paramount's prop-making department, "it was made from a plastic material, a gelatinous mass that was tough but still able to transmit light. More than \$300 worth of neon lights were implanted within its core, which was then covered with strips of lucite and lemurith, the whole thing being welded together with acids. Weighing more than 1,000 pounds and measuring five feet wide, ten feet long, and five feet six inches high, 'The Thing,' in addition to lighting up, oscillated, responding to an elaborate system of air-pressure controlled by a myriad of solenoid and needle valves and manifolds."

Regrettably, the prop is every bit as plastic and unwieldy as its production blueprint suggests. It never once gives the appearance of being "alive," a defect that is never more evident than in the creature's final, outsized metamorphosis, when it literally had to be "pushed" out of the cave by grips to confront its adversaries.

In the past few decades, the late Jack Arnold has acquired a reputation as a filmmaker with an auteurist's flair for generating suspense and atmosphere, particularly in his stylistic use of stark, distinctive settings. In his twilight years, Arnold relished the belated attention he received from both serious scholars and fans of the genre. Much to William Alland's dismay, the director generally fostered the notion that he was the sole creative force behind such enduring classics of the sci-fi screen as *CREATURE FROM THE*

BLACK LAGOON and THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (1957).

While he deservedly praises his most oft-used director for his skill and craftsmanship, Alland is clearly resentful of the fact that Arnold took the lion's share of the credit for the success of the movies they made together. "According to Jack, they were his ideas, his this, his that, on and on," he told Tom Weaver, in an effort to set the record straight. "When he would mention me—if he mentioned me at all—I was nothing but a front-office man . . . The reason that I used Jack Arnold a lot is that he had very little ego when it came to working with me. He was very controllable . . . He would come aboard perhaps a week or two before we started shooting, and he wasn't involved in rewriting or any of that . . ."

"I liked Jack because he never got original ideas!" Alland laughed, paying Arnold a left-handed compliment. "I didn't want creative directors, because I was a creator! . . . All he did was take the script and start to shoot. He had very little input on anything else. He was a push-button director for me."

Heading up the cast of THE SPACE CHILDREN is 12-year-old Michel Ray, whose quiet sensitivity and enigmatic presence made him an excellent choice to portray the alien's emissary. Born in England to German/French parents, Michel was a child prodigy who was proficient in five languages. He made his motion picture debut as an adopted child whose birth mother tries to win him back in the moving 1954 British film THE DIVIDED HEART. (Interestingly, Martin Stephens, the lethal alien child of 1960's VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED, made his debut in the same film.) When director Irving Rapper was casting the fine King Bros./RKO picture THE BRAVE ONE in 1955, and was seeking a young boy for the demanding lead role, his friend Robert Alda recommended Michel for the part. As the little Mexican urchin, Leonardo, who saves his pet bull from an untimely death in the ring, Michel gave a gut-wrenching performance. He prolonged his visit to America and appeared in three more features, as well as an Off-Broadway play. In THE TIN STAR (1957), starring Henry Fonda and Anthony Perkins, Michel played Betsy Palmer's half-breed son. Universal-International's suspense/sudser FLOOD TIDE (1958) featured him as an emotionally disturbed crippled boy whose malicious lies send a man to prison for murder. Michel returned to England after appearing in THE SPACE CHILDREN and acted in only one more film, LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962). As one of a pair of homosexual followers of Peter O'Toole's Lawrence, Michel is reluctantly put to death by his beloved master after being mortally wounded. Since then, Ray

has put his show business career behind him, and currently lives in Normandy, France.

Most of the other child actors in THE SPACE CHILDREN are familiar to sci-fi/horror and vintage TV fans. Who could forget Sandy Descher, the young child who was frightened out of her mind by THEM! (1954)? Both Johnny Crawford and Johnny Washbrook scored successes on the tube: Crawford was on the verge of gaining recognition for his long-running role of Chuck Connors' son Mark in THE RIFLEMAN when he was cast in THE SPACE CHILDREN. Washbrook had already costarred opposite Anita Louise and Gene Evans in the early '50s horse opera MY FRIEND FLICKA. And little Alan Roberts, in Jack H. Harris' DINOSAURUS! (1960), played the native boy who cavorted with a revived Brontosaurus and a culture-shocked cave man.

Due for the most part to the inadequacies of the screenplay in terms of dialogue and characterization, the adult players in THE SPACE CHILDREN are less effective than their young costars. Adam Williams and Peggy Webber are well cast as typical American parents facing a threat to their tidy little world. A familiar face in the movies and on television, Williams figured prominently in Alfred Hitchcock's NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959), as one of James Mason's doggedly loyal henchmen. Peggy Webber had been a performer since the age of two-and-a-half. A leading lady in network radio, she

appeared on hundreds of radio shows, TV shows, and in features. (She popped up with great regularity on both the radio and TV versions of DRAGNET.) A child prodigy like Michel Ray, Webber wrote and directed her own radio series at age 11, and wrote scripts for live and taped TV while still in her teens. She played one of the three witches in Orson Welles' 1948 screen adaptation of Shakespeare's MACBETH and is best known to genre fans as the victimized newlywed in AIP's THE SCREAMING SKULL (1958).

As Project Thunderer's military leader and its head scientist, Manley and Wahrman (a neat play on words), Richard Shannon and Raymond Bailey, respectively, have the unenviable task of breathing life into tiresome stock characterizations. Shannon's single-tracked colonel is often contrasted with Bailey's maddeningly "wise" doctor/philosopher. Bailey, who played this kind of part over and over again in '50s sci-fi, is saddled with much of the script's lame, self-conscious dialogue. ("A man of science is like a deep sea diver. He mustn't be afraid to walk down where it's dark and frightening in the hope of scooping up a handful of truths.")

*Continued on page 82*



# Book Ends

## The Scarlet Street Review of Books

### BACK TO THE BATCAVE

Adam West, with Jeff Rovin  
Berkeley, 1994

257 pages—\$12.95

Truly much ado about nothing—but allow me to admit up front that I never understood the appeal of the BATMAN television program and have always been immune to camp. The show always seemed to mirror the ugliest excesses of the tacky '60s, and I suppose I've always harbored a resentment toward the program for not presenting the material straight.

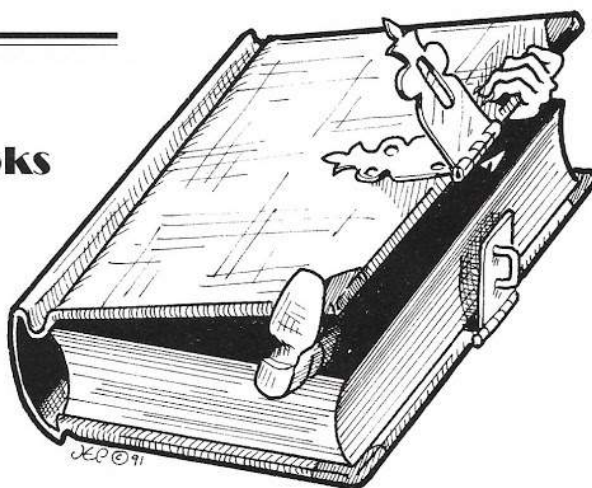
Masterminded largely by executive producer William Dozier and writer Lorenzo Semple, Jr. (the man responsible for the semple-minded script of the 1976 KING KONG remake), BATMAN became a true 10-days wonder. Along with James Bond and the Beatles, it was one of the three Bs of 1966, and blessed with a vocal cult following. Both Bond and the mop tops have survived, but BATMAN is now little more than a curiosity, a mirror into '60s tastes and sensibilities. Considered quite clever at the time, this witless romp is now best remembered for its parade of celebrity villains, gifted actors either slumming or making much needed retirement money.

At the center of it all was Adam West as Batman. In *Back to the Batcave*, he recounts the history of BATMAN in tedious detail, pep-

pering his book with endless stories about the various stars who appeared on the show. All of his stories have the feel of commercial breaks, all flash and promise with very little substance. There was nothing to West's characterization of Batman and equally little to the telling of his life. He reveals nothing about himself in his book other than that he is neither very interesting nor very bright. I was a little touched by the man's naivete, though, as he wondered why he was passed over the role in 1989's big-budget BATMAN or lost out on playing (gulp!) James Bond—but an autobiography should offer more than that. West does not dwell on his person history, figuring that his readers would be more interested in his Batmemories than the story of his life. That is a shame, for it prevents the reader from getting any feeling of the man. With nothing to hold onto but the history of TV's BATMAN, West comes across as an empty cowl.

He does, however, provide an episode guide to the series, complete with cast lists and anecdotes about the making of each episode. It will prove invaluable to BATMAN fans who managed to wade through the preceding memoirs.

—Bob Madison



### BOY WONDER: MY LIFE IN TIGHTS

Burt Ward, with Stanley Ralph Ross  
Logical Figments Books, 1995

300 pages—\$14.95

Holy exposé! Robin the Boy Wonder, in the person of Burt Ward, chimes in with his version of Bat-history with the tell-all tome *Boy Wonder: My Life in Tights*. Truth be told, the book would be better subtitled *My Life Out of Tights*, since Ward's anecdotes all lean toward the lascivious. (The tempting cover depicts a woman's hand unzipping a pair of green briefs worn by an otherwise nude young man.)

The mid-'60s phenomenon that was TV's BATMAN is remembered affectionately today by those initially caught off-guard by its mad-cap mix of camp and satire. Pushing comicdom's clichés just a bit beyond the norm (no one in real life actually exclaims "Great Scott!" or makes a sound remotely resembling "Bam!" when punching a wrongdoer), BATMAN exposed the straight-faced foolishness behind our childhood heroes, but did so fondly and with great good humor. Its influence is felt in all four Batfilms, with the Joker creating "art" in 1989's BATMAN (in a dull scene inspired by the episode "Pop Goes the Joker"), the Penguin running for mayor in 1992's BATMAN RETURNS (inspired by "Hizzoner the Penguin"), and BATMAN FOREVER (1995) and BATMAN AND ROBIN (1997) both wholeheartedly embracing the outrageousness of the original series.

Naturally, Ward has little to say about any of this. What looms large in his legend, instead, and what



Continued on page 83

## SCREEN

*Continued from page 27*

served to bring the homoerotic underpinnings of the vampire legend front and center, giving the film legitimate claim as the screen's first all-out lesbian vampire romp.

It came at an opportune time for England's celebrated House of Horrors, which was anxious to scare up new interest in their increasingly formulaized Dracula movies. LeFanu's concept of a female vampire, especially one played by the generously endowed Ingrid Pitt, had natural box-office appeal, enough for American International to put up most of the financing.

Using only the bare bones of LeFanu's source material, the script promptly returns to the Bram Stoker basics, focusing on the premise of an unsuspecting household unwittingly playing host to a Satanic predatory spirit. In this case, it is Carmilla, a stunningly beautiful vampiress who prefers the daughters of the Austrian aristocracy for her prey. After securing an appropriate homestead, the lady soon takes to lolling in the day's warm sunshine, sipping (red) wine, and gorging on the blood of young girls in their bedchambers at night.

For all its fervent revisionism, *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS* seems a tame and hopelessly tacky movie today. Director Roy Ward Baker stages the mild scenes of lesbian seduction in a self-consciously leering, soft-core pornographic style that assured the full measure of titillation for its target teen audience. Distressingly, Hammer's old guard of technicians, who were chiefly responsible for providing the studio's low-budget films with a sumptuous Gothic richness, were being replaced by lesser talents. As a result, *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS* is not only a cheap movie, it looks like one, too. Technically, the film is wildly uneven. A beautiful, hypnotic effect of a shrouded female vampire rising from the grave stands in stark contrast to the amazingly primitive rear-projection work, grating zoom shots, and obvious matte paintings. The actors, according to David Del Valle's liner notes, were selected from "the top rank of British character actors." Maybe so, but no one seems to exert themselves unduly, except for

the indefatigable Peter Cushing as a vampire hunter and Kate O'Mara as a sexually-repressed governess.

Once it strays from its sexual novelty, *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS*



becomes increasingly routine, drawing heavily from the familiar clutch of horror clichés. Hammer probably does deserve kudos for reenergizing the tired vampire oeuvre, but you can't get away from the realization that endless scenes of gushing blood and close-ups of sharpened fangs penetrating naked flesh are just as tiresome as the creaky old bromides they were replacing. *BLOOD AND ROSES*, the 1960 Roger Vadim film which covered the same ground as *THE VAMPIRE LOVERS* with far more imagination and discretion, never looked better.

Bucking the letterboxing trend, the film is presented full-screen and is conspicuously devoid of any extras. The disc quality is surprisingly poor, barely up to VHS standards of a decade ago. The image is consistently murky, the colors muted, and the print scratched. Adding insult to injury, Orion's uses the truncated American one for the transfer. Unforgivable.

—Michael Brunas

### THE WIZARD OF OZ

Image

Two Sides: CLV

\$39.95

What's that, you say you've seen *THE WIZARD OF OZ* before? It's on the tube once a year, so why should you bother shelling out \$XX.XX for the laserdisc?

Listen, I'll tell you: if watching the sometimes edited, sometimes

faded broadcast of this 1939 musical fantasy is the only way you've ever seen *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, then you've never seen *THE WIZARD OF OZ*. I grew up with the annual TV airing, when all we had in the family manse was a black and white set, and I'll never forget the first time I saw the film in color and discovered that the Wicked Witch was green! Green! I was stunned! Well, watching *THE WIZARD OF OZ* on laser is equally as stunning an experience!

No matter how familiar the fairytale may be, you'll find yourself whisked away by the color, the music, the spectacle, much as Kansas-born Dorothy Gale (Judy Garland) is whisked over the rainbow and into the Merrie Old Land of Oz. The film serves, too, as a tornado-driven time machine to a style of performance, born of vaudeville and burlesque and the Ziegfeld Follies, now sadly vanished. Though this wasn't the sole movie role for any of them, stage vets Ray Bolger (the Scarecrow), Bert Lahr (the Cowardly Lion), Jack Haley (the Tin Man), and Frank Morgan (the Wizard) all gained screen immortality with this one motion picture. With the stamp of Broadway all



over its bright yellow bricks, is it any wonder that Ziggy's widow herself, Billie Burke, puts in a bubbly appearance as Glinda, the Good Witch of the North?

Which brings us, naturally, back to the Wicked Witch of the West—a role originally intended for the once and future Spider Woman, Gale Sondergaard, but made all her

own by the remarkable Margaret Hamilton. If you think *THE WIZARD* doesn't contain enough horror to grace the pages of *Scarlet Street*, then you never saw this hatchet-faced, Halloween harridan when you were a wide-eyed kid.

There's Broadway and Hollywood magic in *THE WIZARD OF OZ* that will never grow stale, never die, and there isn't a better way to experience that magic than with this beautiful, multi-audio (English, Spanish, and French) laser release.

—Drew Sullivan

### TARGET EARTH

The Roan Group  
Side One: CLV, Side Two CAV  
\$49.95

"Right now, even my desk at the home office would look good," grimly intones our straight-arrow hero as downtown Los Angeles is overrun with an invading army of robots in *TARGET EARTH*.

After the richly-colored, eye-popping opulence of George Pal's *WAR OF THE WORLDS* (1954), producer Herman Cohen unleashed his own version of urban apocalypse in gritty black-and-white. The first reel is something out of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*. A handful of disparate characters find themselves roaming the deserted streets of the City of Angels after an evacuation. It isn't long before they're dodging death-rays issued by steel-plated visitors from Venus, who straddle down Wilshire Boulevard, seemingly impervious to just about any weapon the military throws their way.

Released by Allied Artists in 1954, this boomer classic came a few years before Cohen perfected his teenage horror formula at American International. The differences are palpable. The film is not peopled by misunderstood malt shop denizens, but rather by disaffected adults whose past troubles run deep. In the first scene, the leading lady (Kathleen Crowley) awakens in her bed after a bungled suicide attempt. The secondary characters include a pair of bickering middle-aged boozers (Virginia Grey and Richard Reeves) and a gun-toting punk (Robert Ruark) on the lam from the gas chamber. Only Richard Denning as "the man in the

gray flannel suit" hero doesn't carry any psychological baggage, and he, predictably, is the dullest character except for the stone-faced military brass who stoically track the approaching menace.

That is, if menace is the right word. The klutzy robot suit (only one was made to represent the entire alien army) could easily be mistaken for a high school shop project if Cohen didn't admit on the lecture track that it was actually assembled in his garage. Fortunately, the robot isn't allowed major screen time and is usually only seen haplessly clinking out of alleyways. (Hey, it sounds like real metal!) Overall, *TARGET EARTH* shapes up as one of the more endearing low-budget Creature Features of its era. The acting has a ring of conviction, the big city atmosphere distinctly suggests a film noir sensibility, and Paul Dunlap's score is a stirring fusion of macho militarism and '50s futurism.

*TARGET EARTH* is an ideal film for videotape viewing, but serious collectors will find Herman Cohen's lecture track on Roan's laserdisc irresistible. The producer is as engagingly personable as ever, a street-smart independent of the old school with little patience for pretense or the new Hollywood corporate elite. Though paying tribute to a tireless crew who extracted full value from his \$80,000 budget and a game troupe of actors who rarely required a retake, Cohen isn't above gently mocking his own cinematic endeavors. At one point he even tells his listeners to feel free to laugh at the robotic antics!

The film is presented in letterbox format using a near-mint 35mm print for the transfer. Only the theatrical trailer is of dupey quality.

—Michael Brunas

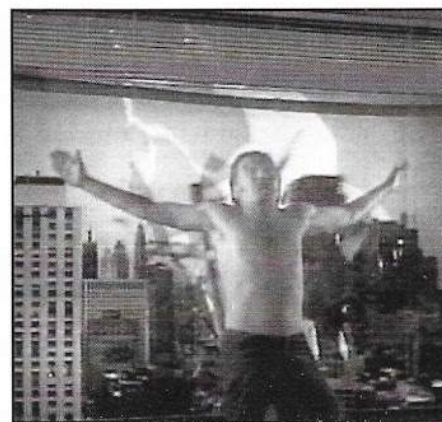
### GHOST STORY

MCA Universal  
Two Sides: CLV  
\$34.95

*GHOST STORY* boasts a once-in-a-lifetime cast (Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and John Houseman, all but Fairbanks having now fled this plane of existence) and a fairly engrossing, if confusing, example of the title. The 1981 production also stars Craig Wasson, Alice Krige,

and Patricia Neal, the latter wasted in a do-nothing role.

Future TV star Ken Olin makes a brief appearance as a younger version of one of the four elderly leads. (Gee, who do you think he looks like?)



In this age in which "restored" motion pictures are being released to laserdisc in abominably spliced and edited versions (see—or rather, don't see—*THE VAMPIRE LOVERS*), MCA Universal has done an admirable job of putting this *STORY*'s pieces back together again. Scenes recut for TV, including Craig Wasson's full-frontal fall through a high-rise window to his death, have been seamlessly put in place, as have the few scenes of genuine horror.

*GHOST STORY* is no classic along the lines of *THE HAUNTING*, but it's good for a chill or two.

—Drew Sullivan

## DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

Continued from page 56

own planet, but if you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned-out cinder."

In real life, General Curtis LeMay, in 1965, explained what to do about the North Vietnamese Communists: "My solution to the problem would be to tell [them] . . . they've got to draw in their horns and stop their aggression or we're going to bomb them into the Stone Age."

There's not much difference between Klaatu's threat and LeMay's. Both are mundane, substantively unlike the Bible's prophecy of an afterlife of eternal damnation for unrepentant sinners. The Jesus of Christianity does care how people run their own planet.

The coming of Klaatu might do the Earth more harm than good. After his ship takes off and the film ends, people might start out by saying that, of course, war is a terrible waste, immoral, bad. Of course life would improve if humans stopped fighting . . .

But then the population might think things over and react to Klaatu's speech the way John Brosnan does in *Future Tense*. "Admittedly [THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL] is more sophisticated in style than most 1950s sf movies . . . but the basic story and theme are badly flawed . . . [A]s the alien's civilization is supposed to be peace-loving it hardly seems logical or morally acceptable that it should threaten the natives on Earth with an even greater act of violence. Nor is their solution to our problems very attractive—namely that we should submit ourselves to the rule of a group of implacable, authoritarian robots like the one which has accompanied the alien to Earth. . . . The idea of placing our basic human rights in the custody of a machine, or any 'superior force,' is not only an admission of defeat but also one which smacks of totalitarianism."

But perhaps this apparent flaw in the film is a great and largely misunderstood strength. The vast majority of critics like Klaatu, with his sad dignity, and perceive him as heroic and Christlike. However, Klaatu's personal attractiveness and reluctance to commit genocide aren't nearly enough to make him "good;" nor does it follow logically that he comes from a morally superior, pacifist civilization.

In *Science Fiction in the Cinema* (A. S. Barnes & Co., 1970), John Baxter calls the notion of the robot police force "alarmingly Fascist." Yes, exactly. Liberty-loving human beings react to Fascists by fighting back. The movie's lobby card shows a metaphor of humanity's intense loathing of domination, with an enormous,

animalistic fist (unlike anything seen in the film) clutching the Earth.

It seems likely that, after Klaatu leaves Earth, mankind might try to extend human aggression into space, the very thing he warned against. We might wage a modern Industrial Revolution, build new and better weapons, and try to go get those bastards who think they can boss us around. We might try to bomb them back to whatever they call their Stone Age. Whereupon, if Klaatu isn't bluffing, Gort's legions would proceed to do exactly what Klaatu threatens, the very thing he says he hopes will never happen. This isn't Armageddon: it's way too local. With his lack of god-like omniscience, Klaatu misjudges what to expect

from humans as badly as those who gun him down misunderstand him. THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL transcends pulp fiction by offering a believable scenario of mutual culture shock that may lead to unintended consequences, not a battle of Ultimate Good versus Ultimate Evil.

Why does Klaatu tell Earthlings to keep our aggressions to ourselves? Here's what he actually says about why his world created robot police: "The penalty for provoking their action is too terrible to risk. The result is, we live in peace, without arms or armies, secure in the knowledge that we are free from aggression and war, free to pursue more profitable enterprises."

Profitable enterprises! Profitable in what sense? Spiritual? Material?

Well, for all his benign appearance and scholarly demeanor, Klaatu says not one word, ever, anywhere in the film, about pursuing art, music, great literature, or holiness. Notice the places that he and Bobby don't visit in Washington, D. C. They don't walk a few blocks to the Mellon Museum (now the National Gallery) to see great art. They don't walk a little farther to the Library of Congress to see great books. They don't walk a few more blocks to Constitution Hall (the Kennedy Center hadn't been built yet) to hear great music. They don't go to the magnificent National Cathedral, in use while under construction. Klaatu shows no interest in such things.

Most likely, with his excellent command of languages learned from listening to Earth's media, Klaatu means what any speaker of American English would mean by "profitable enterprises" in 1951. In what context other than business would Klaatu have learned that particular expression? He's talking about vulgar commerce! War disrupts trade!

Klaatu never says that he warns the people of Earth because he loves Helen or humankind. On the contrary, when he talks to Professor Barnhardt, Klaatu sounds completely cold-blooded. For instance, he



Gort (Lock Martin), Helen (Patricia Neal), and Klaatu (Michael Rennie) meet the public.

claims he could force Earth to take his message seriously by destroying New York City, a city inhabited by millions of human beings. If the assembled scientists won't listen, Klaatu says coolly, then "the planet Earth would have to be eliminated." He doesn't look distressed in the least by any of this. The normally impassive expression on his face changes to mild amusement as he accepts Barnhardt's recommendation for a less appalling demonstration, "something dramatic but not destructive," as Klaatu puts it.

Klaatu never indicates that he cares about human beings, except perhaps Bobby—but then, acting nice to Bobby is the perfect strategy for pumping information out of this excellent source. As Klaatu leaves Earth, his wan smile to Helen looks more relieved than loving. Most likely, Klaatu appeals to the best of human nature because it's expedient for his culture to approach Earth in this way. If he can persuade or intimidate the natives to behave morally by Earth's own standards and to live in peace, then his society can turn a profit with a lot less trouble. He behaves, not like Jesus preaching morality as the ticket to Heaven, but like that other type of Higher Power, the Spanish conquistador, or in modern times, the Great White Father, the representative of the foreign fruit company trying to

enforce law and order in a banana republic where local revolutions play hell with the shipping schedule.

Klaatu isn't Jesus or the Devil. He's just practical, much like Tom, the insurance salesman, the film's other businessman and Klaatu's opposite number. The minute mankind invades the interplanetary supply lines and dirty up the merchandise with blood and bullets, the robot enforcement squad will rub us out. Then Klaatu's civilization will forget us and carry on business as profitably as usual. Or we can buy Klaatu's insurance policy and live in peace.

This isn't the New Testament. It isn't the Bible at all, though Klaatu's job, like the conquistador's, gets easier if the natives mistake him for a god. No, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* comes closer to the opening act of a Greek tragedy. Scriptwriter North and director Wise don't offer any pat resolution to this scenario. They simply pose the problem, then leave viewers to imagine an unseen closing act, in which the pride and strength of humankind, the Never Say Die determination to live free of domination by foreign government, could become, quite literally, a fatal weakness.



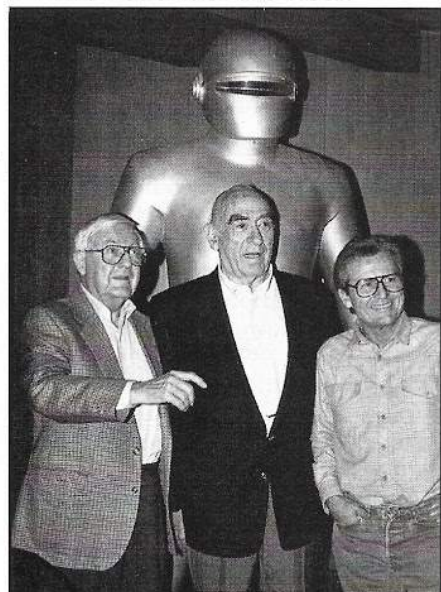
## BILLY GRAY

*Continued from page 53*

**SS:** How did the pay scale on *DAY* compare with some of your other films?

**BG:** Well, I was building my salary up in those days. I probably worked on this one for about four or five hundred a week, which wasn't bad for a kid actor. But it had taken me about eight or nine years of work to get it up to that, because I started getting \$25 a day for saying something like, "Extra!"

Director Robert Wise, producer Julian Blaustein, and actor Billy Gray are reunited with Gort at a convention in the 1980s. Lock Martin was not under the visor.



Read all about it!" All the one-line jobs here and there—I probably did about 200 different small roles!

**SS:** Do you have a favorite among your films?

**BG:** Yes, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* would have to be my all-time favorite . . . not just because it has an important message, but as we said, it holds up. It is a good piece of film work and you're not blessed very often to be in these things. The art direction, for instance, was excellent; the interior of that space ship could be used right now. If you were to build that set today, people would look at it and say, "Yeah!"—meaning it's still convincing. The film is well written, well directed, and well acted. I couldn't be happier that I was involved with it.

## PATRICIA NEAL

*Continued from page 49*

rector, Mel Stuart, he was a foul one. Roald didn't get on well with him. Lots of people in the world didn't get on well with him.

**SS:** Was your husband ever happy with any film adaptation of his work?

**PN:** Not really. No, I don't think he was ever blissfully happy with one.

**SS:** In 1981, you made *GHOST STORY* with Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

**PN:** I haven't even seen it, but apparently you have to look quick to see me. Apparently I'm in bed in the distance, and at the grave, and

that's it. Still, we had a good time! I had just bought a house in Martha's Vineyard, so I kept busy buying furniture for it.

**SS:** Which of your films do you like most?

**PN:** Well, I liked *HUD*, and I also liked the Elia Kazan one, *A FACE IN THE CROWD*, and *THREE SECRETS*.

**SS:** Your favorite leading man . . . ?

**PN:** Well, Gary Cooper! (Laughs)

**SS:** Of course!

**PN:** As you know! I loved working with Van Heflin, too; he was a divine man. Jack Albertson, Ronald Reagan . . .

**SS:** You worked with Reagan . . .

**PN:** I made my first film, *JOHN LOVES MARY*, with him. I had no idea he'd be President, but he was very interested in politics, always.

**SS:** Did he talk politics on the set?

**PN:** Yes, he did, sometimes. When we did *THE HASTY HEART*, we both lived in the Savoy Hotel, and we lived side by side. I went out with him sometimes . . . nothing romantic, I want you to know that. It's just that he was getting a divorce from Jane Wyman. Jane was divorcing him and he was very unhappy. I was with Gary Cooper, but nobody knew it. So Ronald Reagan and I went every place together, but it was not romantic at all.

**SS:** Just good friends?

*Continued on page 82*

## PATRICIA NEAL

*Continued from page 81*

PN: Yeah! (Laughs)

SS: Are there any films you wanted to make but didn't?

PN: Well, I did SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER on stage in London, and that's what sold it as a film. The producer, Sam Spiegel, was on a plane, and he read that I was doing it and came to see it on the second or third night. Then he called Tennessee Williams that same night and bought it. He'd send other actresses to see me. They'd be taken out afterwards to a great nightclub, sent home in his Rolls Royce. I got great notices, the most beautiful

notices you'll ever see—but then I read that Elizabeth Taylor had been signed to do the part.

SS: Any other disappointments like that?

PN: Yes, when I did one with Gary Cooper, BRIGHT LEAF, I wanted so badly to play the part that Lauren Bacall played. I did everything except kill myself I so badly wanted it, and they wouldn't even think about it. They wouldn't even consider me, and I was so furious when that happened, because I would have been fabulous in it. When I was on the stage, I would love to have done ROMEO AND JULIET, because I did Juliet's scene

at the studio, and I was fabulous in that, too. You can read articles about it! (Laughs)

SS: Do you prefer stage or screen?

PN: Well, I like them both, really. I think films are great, but acting is acting.

SS: Is there any advice you'd give to people getting into acting, now?

PN: I just wish them all the luck in the world. No, if you want to be an actor, boy, you want to, and you will manage to do it somehow. If you have the guts, you'll manage, but if you don't then you just won't stick it.

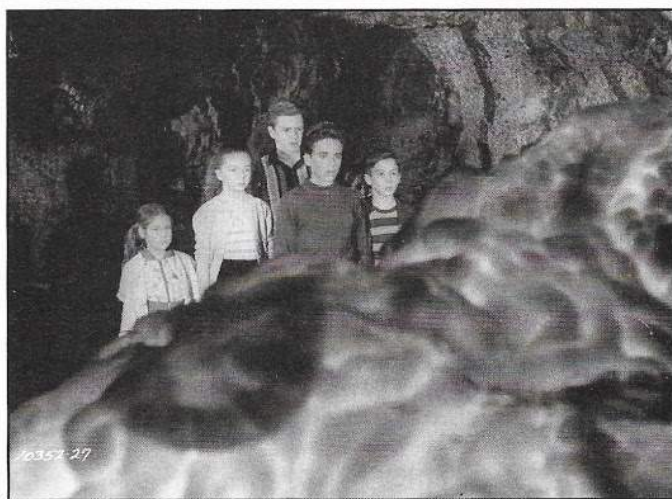
## SPACE CHILDREN

*Continued from page 76*

In supporting roles, former child star Jackie Coogan plays a scientist/father with an itchy finger on the A-bomb button, and Russell Johnson appears briefly as Johnny Washbrook's drunken brute of a stepfather.

THE SPACE CHILDREN received some respectable notices from the trades on its initial release in May 1958. Reviewing the film in *Variety*, "Glib" wrote "... basically, this is a crack, suspense thriller for the Saturday matinee trade. With a flock of moppet thespers on the screen the kids in the audience will have no difficulty in achieving a sense of personal identification ... young Michel Ray ... ably fills the demands of the script ... Direction of Jack Arnold manages to get some credence in the portrayals despite the imaginative story." *Hollywood Reporter's* Jack Moffitt contributed an equally favorable assessment: "In this distinguished little picture, William Alland adds the new element of tenderness to science-fiction films ... Ernest Laszlo's photography ... does the neat trick of presenting the weird and the commonplace at the same time." And from *Harrison's Reports* came the following appraisal: "Like most science-fiction films, this one is too completely fantastic to be taken seriously, but it has been given an interesting and timely treatment and keeps one attentive throughout."

While the film, given its restricted resources, may not have fulfilled its potential as an absorbing, sus-



THE SPACE CHILDREN (1958) pay a visit to their blobby friend from outer space.

penseful entertainment, THE SPACE CHILDREN should be given credit for having its heart in the right place. It tackles an important issue with a sense of sobriety and purpose. Perhaps, with a more cogent script, convincing special effects, and a beefier budget, THE SPACE CHILDREN might have emerged as a minor classic instead of the interesting but seriously flawed film it remains.



## SEX AND THE SINGLE BAT

*Continued from page 40*

Doc Wertham have gotten it right about the Dynamic Duo?

In a word—possibly.

Well, probably ...

Oh, what the hell—yes! Yes, yes, yes!

What couple, gay or otherwise, wouldn't want to live in luxurious, idyllic bliss, working, relaxing, and—ahem—wrestling together? What twosome wouldn't love to be pampered by a superbly efficient but ever discreet manservant? Who doesn't like flowers in big, beautiful vases? "Wish dream?" Of course it's a wish dream! Where Wertham blew it was in thinking, in his typically repressive 1950s way, that the

dream was necessarily a bad thing. Where Feiffer screwed up was in absolving Bruce Wayne of any sexual responsibility, claiming he was "duped" into his Batbed by a lust-crazed Dick Grayson. (As DeCaro so succinctly put it: "Holy matrimony!") Where Miller floundered was in ascribing homosexuality only to acts of violence and villainy.

Well, maybe it's time to wake up and smell the Batsweat. Maybe it's time to acknowledge the gay subtext inherent in this classic saga. Warners certainly hasn't silenced the stories by piling on the women. Trashing BATMAN AND ROBIN online in the *Wizard Press*, Lance Hart ungrammatically griped: "In unison,

*Continued on page 83*

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Barkus is Still Willing . . .

## SEX AND THE SINGLE BAT

*Continued from page 82*

they [the title characters] both look at each other, click their heels together twice, and suddenly blades pop out of the bottom of their boots turning them into ice skates . . . this stinks a little too much of Dorothy worship to me. Well at least they weren't red slippers . . ."

There's no way for either side to win this one, Batgang. The straight fans whine about the gaying of

their fave heroes. The gay fans catch all the hints but grow weary of the Dynamic Duo's refusal to leave that great closet of a Batcave. The question continues to resound and will likely always do so. Are Batman and Robin gay?

In a word—yes.

Well, probably . . .

Oh, what the hell—possibly!



## BOOK ENDS

*Continued from page 77*

proves smuttily entertaining, are the adventures of the Boy Wonder's penis, its problems finding comfort in a pair of scratchy Battights, its vain efforts to remain beyond the reach of a network censor appalled

by its prominence, its frequent escapes into the arms (well, not the arms, exactly) of countless wanton women, its denudation at a nudist colony, its frequent orgies in tandem with the penis of Caped Crusader Adam West, and its many other hardships.

Nor does Ward neglect his pubic hair, which, poor thing, is forever being twisted, tugged, or caught in such a way as to bring tears to the Boy Wonder's eyes.

Among the chapters you'll find herein: "On Your Knees, Girls, and Stay in Line," "Are Batman and Robin Gay?," "Dangerous Pussy-cats," and the immortal "Holy Impotence! My Testicles Grew to the Size of Grapefruits!"

Are any of these stories true? God (and Alfred) only knows! Are they fun? Definitely! With a foreword by Yvonne (Batgirl) Craig, a few words from Bat-writer Stanley Ralph Ross, a list of Crimefighting Paraphernalia, and a tribute to those cast members who have moved on "to the Great Batcave in the Sky," *Boy Wonder: My Life in Tights* is—Wholly Entertaining!

—Drew Sullivan

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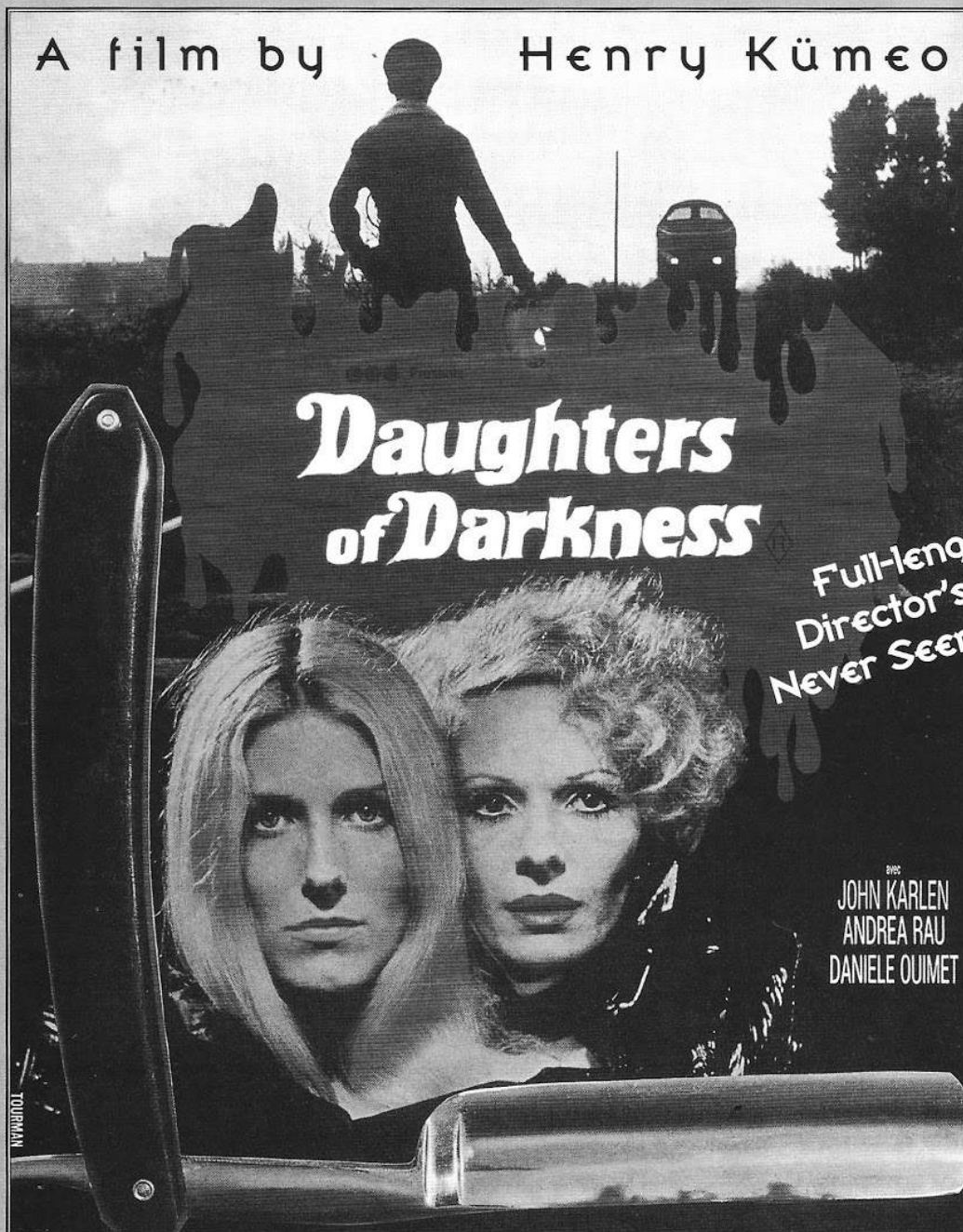
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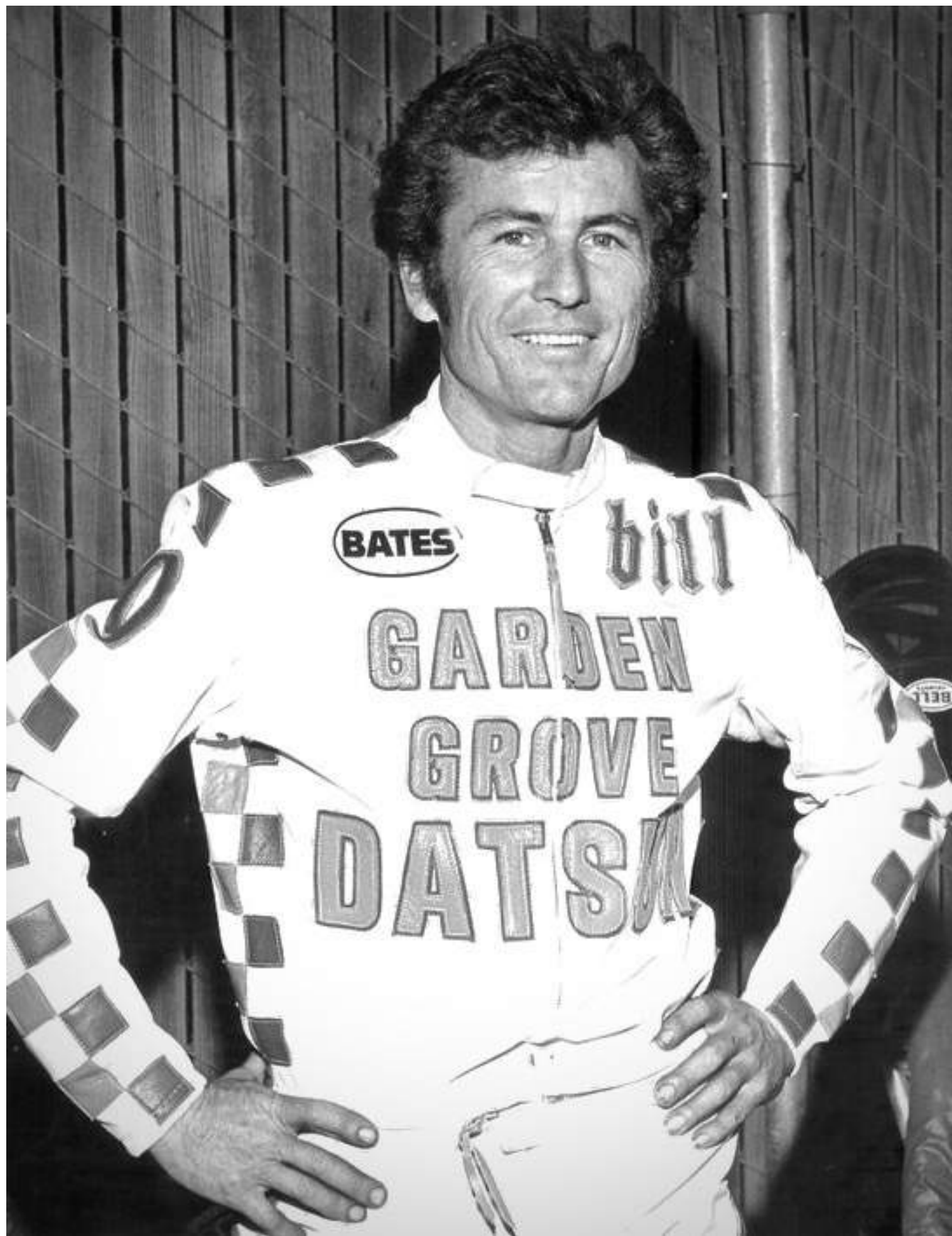
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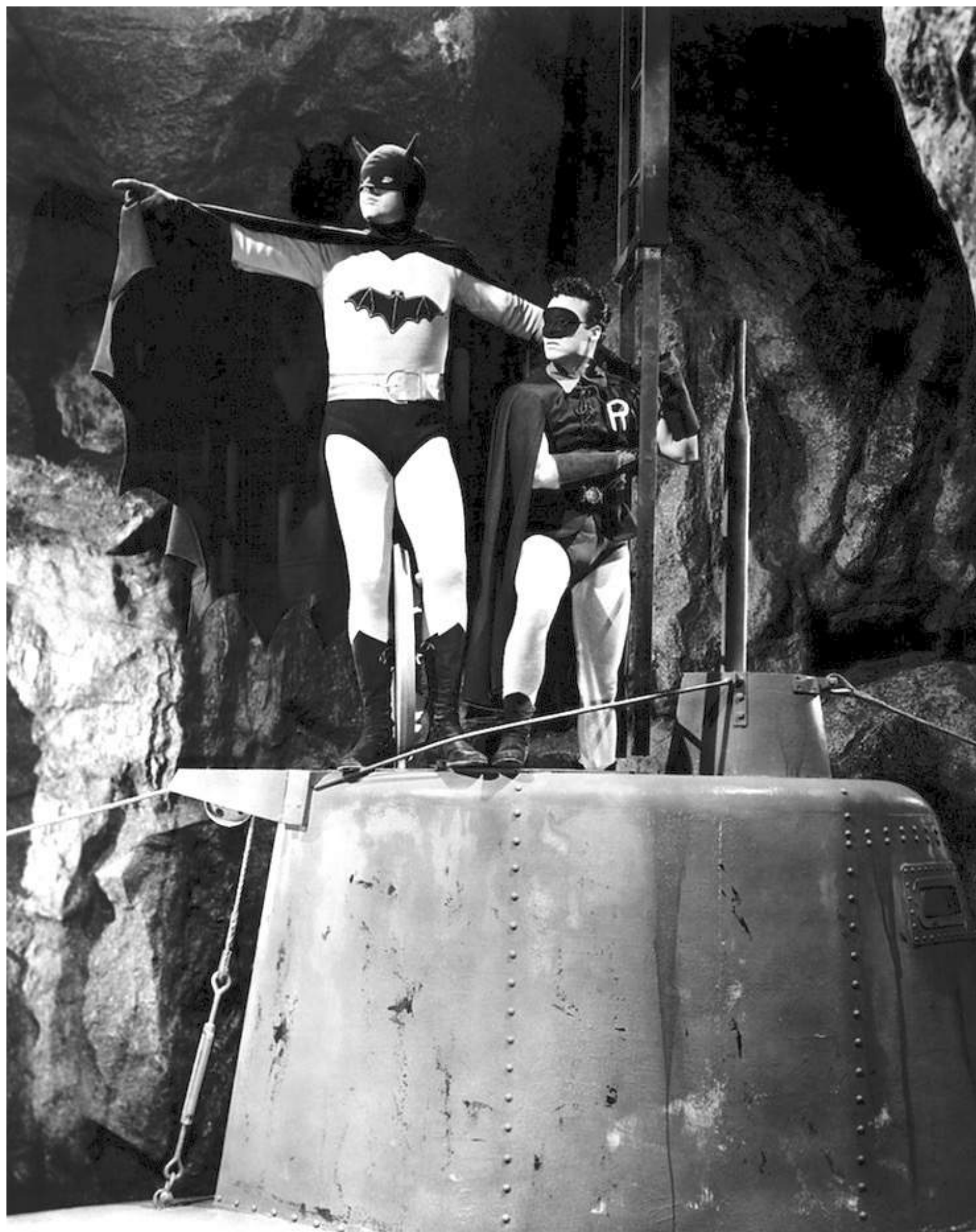




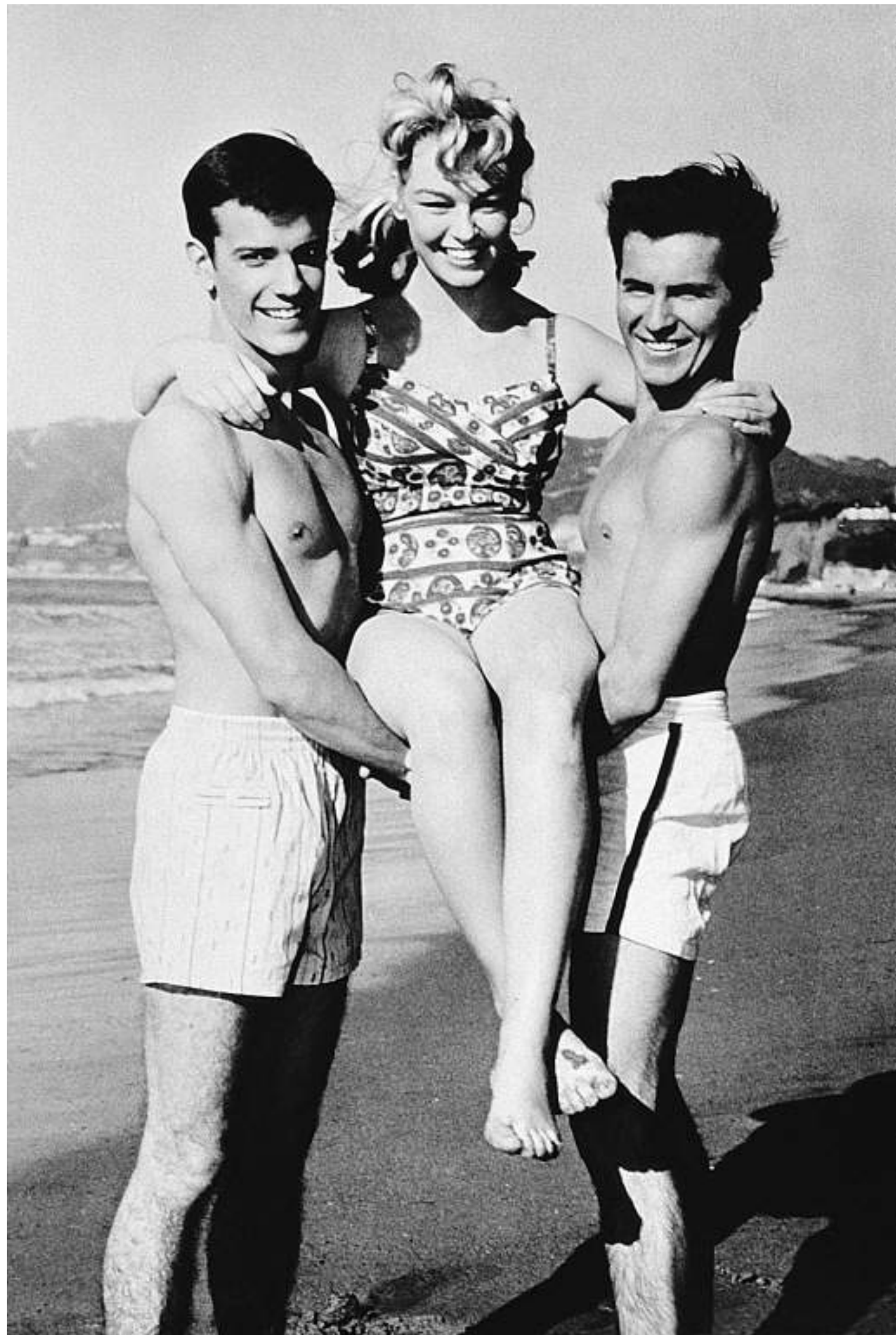
















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20<sup>th</sup>  
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SAM JAFFE BILLY GRAY



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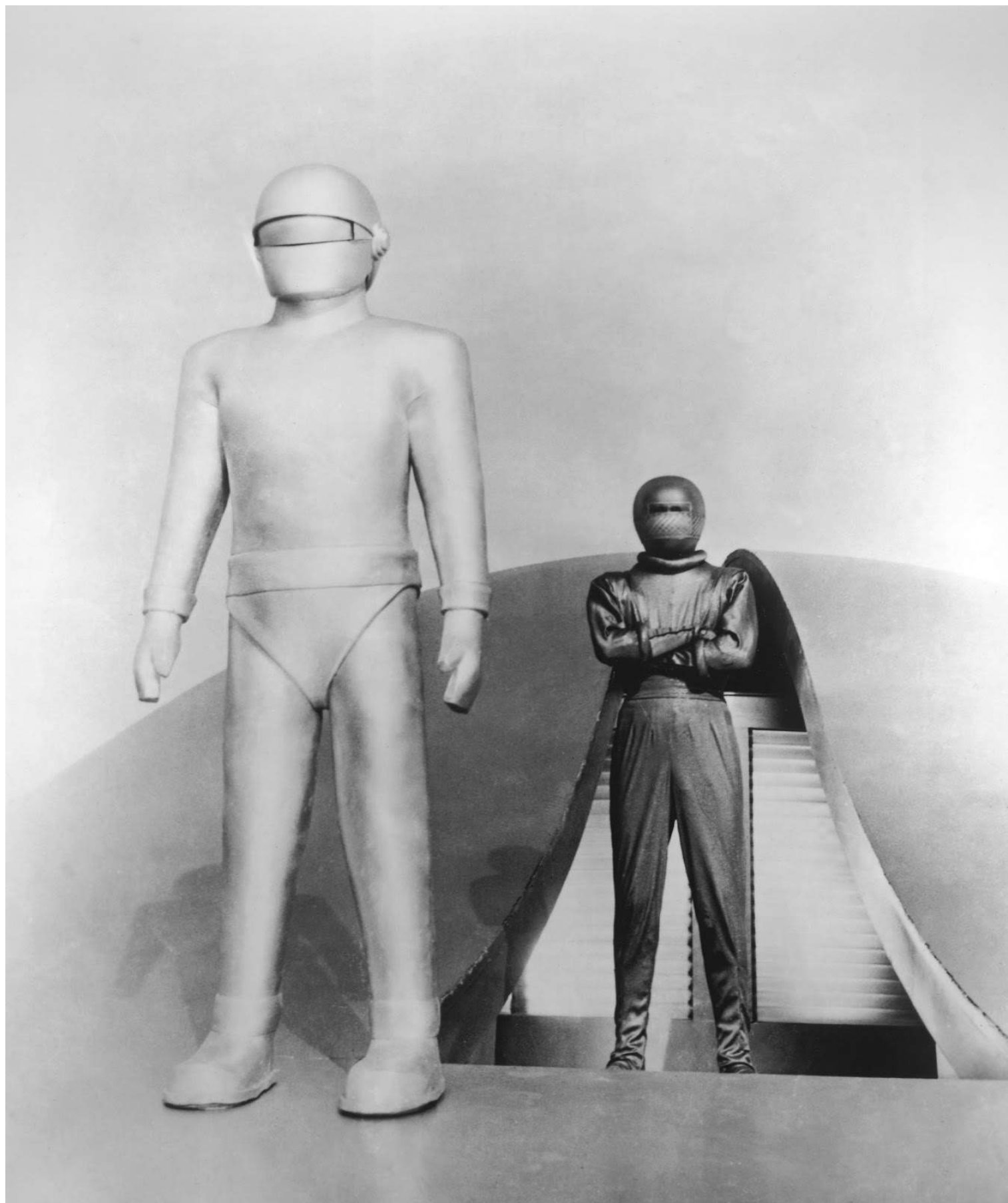
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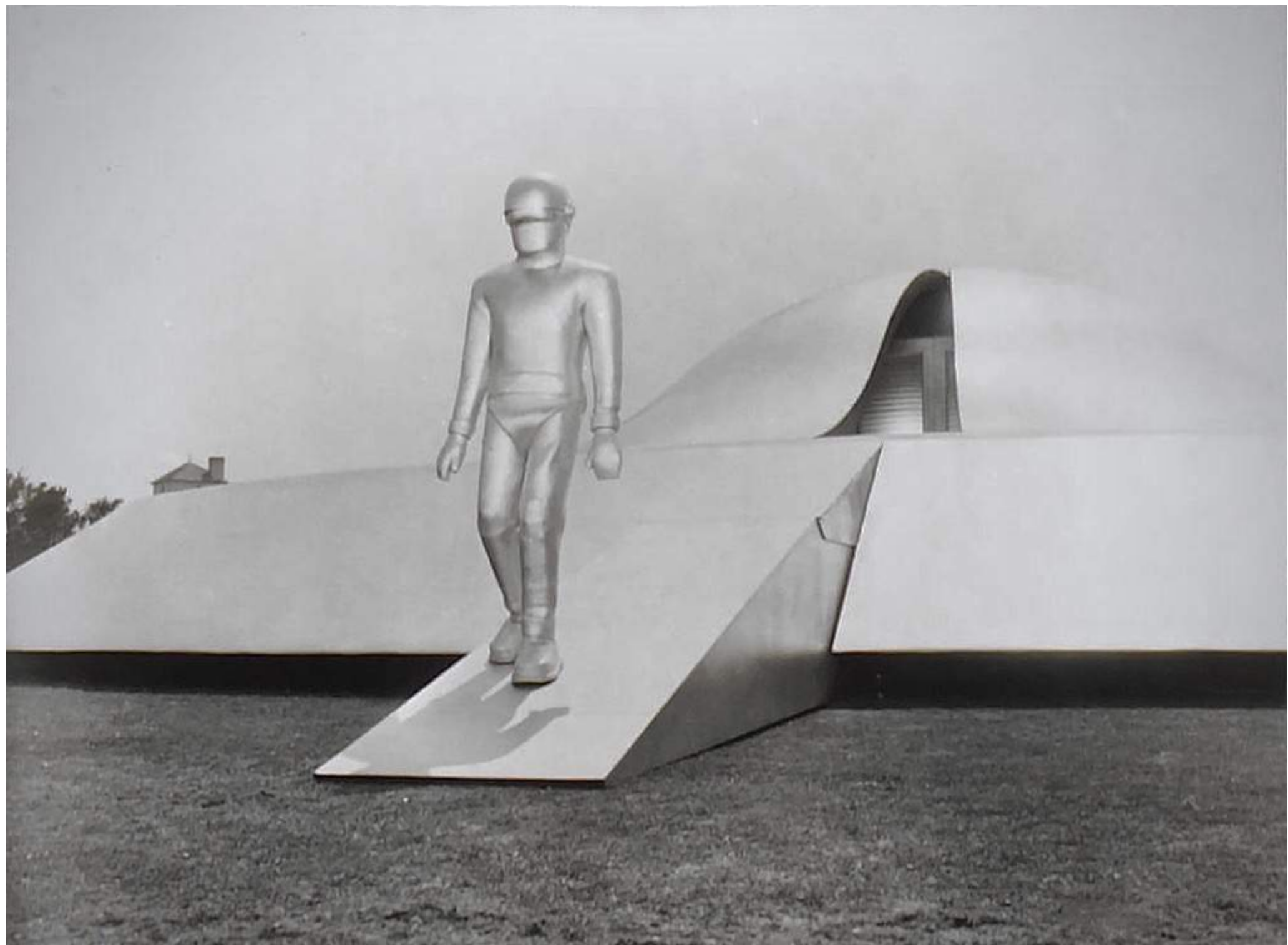
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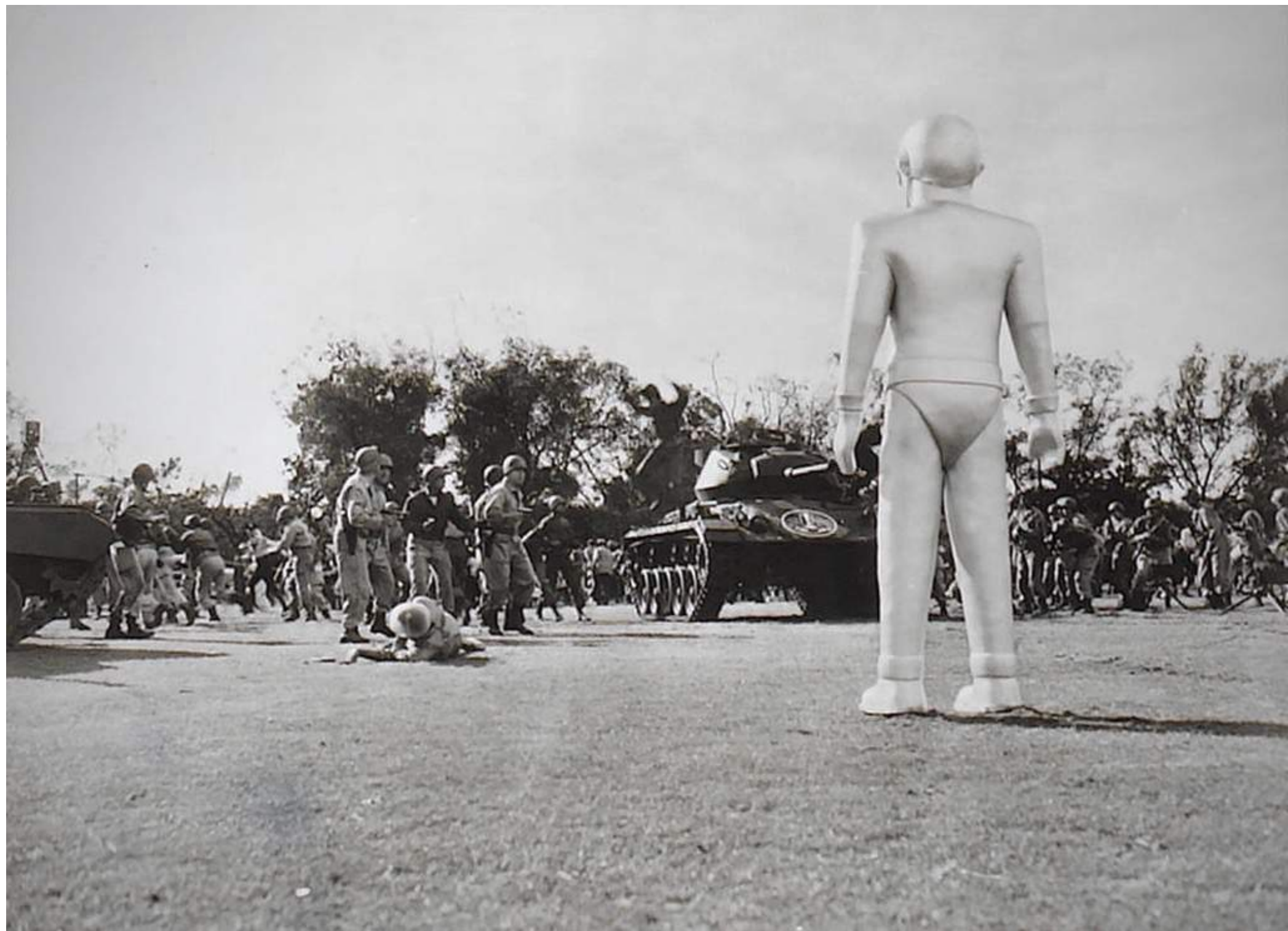
JOSEPH LEO STEIN 1951

**THE DAY THE  
EARTH STOOD STILL**











**DANGEROUS PAWNS**

*of a  
power so  
evil, no  
man...no  
missile  
could  
stop it!*



# THE SPACE CHILDREN

MICHEL RAY • ADAM WILLIAMS  
PEGGY WEBBER • JACKIE COOGAN

**All the children on earth  
enslaved by the thing  
from outer space...**





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